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POET LORE

WORLD LITERATURE

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JEAN SARMENT
GUSTAVO ADOLFO BECQUER
READ BAIN
FRANZ WERFEL
STEFAN GEORGE
HENRI DE REGNIER
LUCY SALAMANCA
GUSTAV DAVIDSON
ERNST VIKTOR KNAPE
RUBEN DARIO
AND OTHERS

SUMMER - AUTUMN, 1939

POET LORE

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Rude Awakening

(PECHEUR D'OMBRES)

A Play in Four Acts

Translated from the French of
JEAN SARMENT
by
FRANCES KEENE *and* ADRIENNE FOULKE

In the country, summer.

In a villa, high-ceilinged room, half hall, half drawing room. A wooden staircase leads to the other rooms. A large window opens on the garden. The room is furnished with taste rather than with style; above all, it is "lived in". A couch near the window, the cushions of which are decorated with needle-work. On the walls, a few pictures, a few painted plates. Two portraits of children, on the piano other photographs which one guesses to be autographed, theatrical pictures. Scores on a music rack; books on hanging book-shelves. A woman's work-basket is on the table. In the garden, great trees. Flowers on the window ledge.

CHARACTERS

John	Nelly
Bishop Lescure	The Mother
Renny	Mary
A Workman	

ACT I.

Eleven o'clock in the morning. Bright sun outside. Renny *is working over blue-prints which he has spread out on a table. He is thirty-five, broad-shouldered, with a frank, open countenance, but a little morose. He is dressed quite carelessly.* Mary *enters, carrying a bouquet of white flowers in a colored vase.*

RENNY. What time is the train due, Mary?

MARY. His Reverence's train?

RENNY. Yes.

MARY. It gets in at eleven forty-seven, Master Renny.

RENNY. Fine. I have plenty of time.

MARY. You hadn't ought to make His Reverence wait; he's not used to it.

RENNY. No, of course not. (*Indicating the flowers*) Heavens, how white they are! Are they for Miss Coislin's room?

MARY. No, they're to go on the table, in front of His Reverence.

RENNY. I'm glad you thought of it. Put a bouquet in Miss Coislin's room too.

MARY. There ain't any more vases.

RENNY. Well, if you have only one vase in the house, the flowers would be more suitable in a young girl's room than before a Bishop's soup-plate.

MARY (*irritably.*) Madam'll tell me; Madam will decide where she wants them . . . (*She goes out.* RENNY *shrugs his shoulders and goes back to work.*)

MOTHER'S VOICE (*singing in the next room.*)

"Ah, my beloved, I swear to thee that I,
That I love thee with all my heart . . . "

Oh, Renny, you know they'll be here soon. Are you ready?

RENNY. Yes.

MOTHER'S VOICE (*still off-stage.*) Don't be late to the station.

RENNY. What makes you think I'll be late?

MOTHER'S VOICE (*still off-stage.*) I've put on my black tulle, dear. It'll make a better impression.

RENNY. That's nice.

MOTHER'S VOICE (*singing.*)

"Surely you understand
That it could not last alway,
It's best that I love you, sweetheart,
And it's best that you go away."

(*The* MOTHER *comes in. She is fifty-five or more. Her hair is just beginning to turn grey. Her face and gestures are still young.*)

RENNY. Happy this morning, dear?

MOTHER. No.

RENNY. But you're singing!

MOTHER. Oh, it's automatic. Dear boy, how could I be with all the troubles I have!

RENNY. You still have a lovely voice.

MOTHER. I don't know. I assure you, I never think about it any more.

RENNY. Good Lord, things aren't going so badly.

MOTHER. Think not?

RENNY. Except for John's illness.

MOTHER. I'm so worried, dear . . . his first books were so promising! What upsets me most is that he made such a fine start.

RENNY. He wore himself out; you know he was never strong.

MOTHER. No, he never was. Neither strong nor sensible. People came and told me that they'd found him walking along the quays at four in the morning — just strolling along with his hands in his pockets. Well, what can you expect?

RENNY. Poor kid, he wore himself out.

MOTHER. Naturally. When I was still singing and used to stay up late after the theatre to have supper with your father or some friends, I paid up for it the next day. Well, with him it was every day . . . and now look what it's brought us to!

RENNY. Poor mother.

MOTHER. Yes.

RENNY. You mustn't give up hope.

MOTHER. Oh, I haven't. But it's so tiresome to have the same hope for so long. You think we're right to have this young girl come, don't you?

RENNY. *If* he recognizes her . . . He certainly seems to have suffered more than was necessary on account of this girl. And he may find a little of his past sorrow in finding her again. In a case like this, as soon as one can suffer, one's better.

MOTHER. If he recognizes her . . . Well, we had to try something. Is he going to recognize her? Does he ever mention her?

RENNY. He mentioned her name just the other day.

MOTHER. Ah!

RENNY. Without any apparent emotion or sorrow, as if it were the name of some chance acquaintance. Perhaps that name doesn't mean anything to him any more.

MOTHER. As in love as all that! When I think . . . He knew better than to tell me about it.

RENNY. Would you have been able to help?

MOTHER. Maybe, dear; I'd have gone to see that young lady. (RENNY *smiles.*) True, I don't understand such young girls. They're pretty terribly sure of themselves. They don't know what's in store for them.

RENNY. They don't think ahead, mother. You can't blame them for cherishing their "freedom of heart" as long as they can.

MOTHER. Shut up about your freedom of heart! Don't talk to me! . . . I was a young girl once! *My* free heart only longed for a master. Only I was particular. I never found "them" attractive enough, or else I didn't like the way they made love to me . . . I ended by meeting your father.

RENNY. Don't blame him.

MOTHER. Well, I just wanted to tell you . . . Anyway, I'd never had anything to do with a young man as distinguished as your brother, and I never saw anyone suffer on my account.

RENNY. Would you have noticed it, dear?

MOTHER. Why, of course.

RENNY. All right, all right.

MOTHER. Still, I suppose I shouldn't judge this young girl too harshly. She agreed to come without having to be begged. That was nice of her . . . and her letter was agreeable.

RENNY. Yes, of course.

MOTHER. What luck, Renny, that I thought of Bishop Lescure! I was almost sure that he was a distant cousin of this girl's family. You see, it paid to write. She probably wouldn't have come without the Bishop . . . A former singer, you know! . . . People are such fools!

RENNY (*who is drawing automatically.*) Yes.

MOTHER. The Bishop's going to stay with the Baron.

He'll come to dinner or supper here from time to time. What could we expect? An old friend . . . he's very pleasant, you know . . . at least he *was* eight or ten years ago. This influx of strangers doesn't upset you, does it?

RENNY. On the contrary.

MOTHER. You're not going to fall in love too, are you?

RENNY. With whom?

MOTHER. With this young girl?

RENNY. Poor mummy.

MOTHER. You know, I'll know right away what to think of her. Young people *see* so badly.

RENNY. But they like to see in their own way.

MOTHER. Yes, I suppose so.

RENNY. It's the privilege of an older generation to discuss mistakes and to review cases.

MOTHER. What cases?

RENNY. Cases won — cases lost —

MOTHER (*looking at him.*) Aren't you happy, either?

RENNY. I've just been going over my various cases, dear. (*There is a short pause.*)

MOTHER. Things turned out very badly for you, didn't they, Renny. Your wife —

RENNY. Oh, Mother, *please!*

MOTHER. Well, I didn't intend to say anything nice about her!

RENNY. I don't want to hear anything unpleasant about her, either.

MOTHER. If you only wanted to, dear — the future —

RENNY. Mother, let's just live from day to day and let the future alone.

MOTHER (*sighing.*) Ah, that's not very gay. I left the theatre for you children, when you were growing up. There wasn't much point to it. I have two sons: one's sick, the other's unhappy.

RENNY. Not unhappy, just resigned.

MOTHER. Yes . . . well . . . If you are satisfied to be like that . . . (*Changing her train of thought.*) You mustn't forget to send over to old Mrs. Couinet's for the squab . . . Where's your brother?

RENNY. In his room.

MOTHER. What shall we give the Bishop to eat Friday?

(JOHN *appears at the top of the stairs. He is twenty-five, but his face has assumed that expression of happiness and joy characteristic of healthy children of twelve on their vacations. Like them, he laughs or leaps about without apparent cause. Nothing desperate or morbid about him: an exuberant and happy child.*)

JOHN. Here I am!

MOTHER. How do you feel this morning, dear?

JOHN. I feel fine. What a lovely dress you have on, Mother. Whom are you going to marry?

MOTHER. Nobody. We're having a guest to lunch.

JOHN. Oh! Then we'll have a good meal.

MOTHER. Don't you usually have good meals?

JOHN. Well, we'll have an even better one. Whom are we having to lunch?

MOTHER. Someone who's come to see you.

JOHN. Oh! Then I'll have to make some more lines, because, if he wants to go fishing, I haven't any more.

MOTHER. Don't bother. You probably won't need them; it's an old friend, Mgr. Lescure.

JOHN. Oh yes! . . . Who's he?

MOTHER. The Bishop of Blois.

JOHN. Yes, I see. He is the man who is like the handle of the umbrella Mrs. Amiot gave you.

MOTHER. No, no! You're confusing him with the colonel.

JOHN. I'm confusing him with the colonel? Then I'll have to figure out what he *is* like.

MOTHER. You haven't seen Mgr. Lescure for ten years.

JOHN. Haven't I?

MOTHER. Don't you remember?

JOHN (*after thinking it over.*) No. What a pity! (*He sits, quietly smiling.*)

MOTHER. You mustn't let it worry you, dear.

JOHN (*calmly.*) It's perfectly natural.

MOTHER. There are names that mean something to you, and others that mean absolutely nothing. (*Warning* RENNY *of her trick by a wink.*) The other day I found some names on a little memorandum pad, names I'd written down a few years ago — I can't even remember the faces to which they

belong — Renny, do you remember John Sellier? (RENNY, *at each name, shakes his head negatively.*) Mrs. Allan? . . . Lucile Marguerite? . . . (*With special emphasis.*) Nelly . . . Nelly . . .

JOHN. Nelly Coislin?

MOTHER. Do you know her? *Did* you know her?

JOHN (*very calmly.*) I knew Nelly Coislin very well.

MOTHER. Who was she?

JOHN. Oh — a young girl; but that's not her name any more.

MOTHER. Why not?

JOHN. 'Cause she's married.

MOTHER. Are you sure?

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER. You must be mistaken.

JOHN. Oh, no. She's married, all right. I know her husband.

MOTHER. Have you seen him?

JOHN. No. But I see him now. (*Haggard look from* MOTHER *to* RENNY.)

MOTHER (*resignedly.*) Then you must be right, dear. Well, see you later, children. Don't forget, Renny, don't be late.

JOHN (*very gay.*) See you later, mother.

MOTHER. You'll have to take a letter to the Post Office for me before lunch, Johnny.

JOHN. Right away!

MOTHER. In five minutes. (*To* RENNY.) I don't want him here when they come. (*To* JOHN, *who has stretched himself out on the couch.*) Are you comfortable there?

JOHN. Very. I'm awake, and I'm as comfortable as if I were asleep. (*The* MOTHER *has gone out.* JOHN *takes a fishing line out of his pocket and carefully tests its strength. There is a pause.*)

RENNY. By the way, here's your cap which you thought you'd lost. (*He hands it to him.*) Old Francis found it.

JOHN. Where was it?

RENNY. By the stream, under a willow-tree.

JOHN. . . . You know what old Francis is like?

RENNY. No, Johnny.

JOHN. He's like a tulip.

RENNY. So?

JOHN. Because of the bloom on his face. Tulips have something benign and honest about them. Yes, he's like a tulip. (RENNY *laughs noiselessly.*) I know what *everybody's* like; I see it right straight off. Oh, you know Jaladis, the druggist? Well, I said to him only yesterday: "Jaladis," I said, "you're like a porcupine." He has a head like a porcupine, you know, and the same little eyes . . . It's only myself I can't classify. I don't know what I'm like. No matter how much I look at myself in the mirror, I can't find it . . . But I will!

RENNY. Of course you will, but don't tire your head over it.

JOHN. Oh, it doesn't tire me, Renny, it interests me; I like to learn, you know.

RENNY. You just stay quiet, old fellow, don't worry about anything.

JOHN. How strange you are! Don't you want me to think about anything? Because I'm crazy? Well, that doesn't keep me from thinking.

RENNY. Shut up, will you? You're not crazy.

JOHN. Oh yes, Renny! Yes, I am.

RENNY. You don't know what you're talking about.

JOHN. What am I, then?

RENNY. You're tired . . . Everyone has spells of being tired.

JOHN. Just as you like. But I know I'm crazy; only you don't know it . . .

RENNY. Listen, Johnny, will you shut up?

JOHN. It doesn't upset me, Renny. My memory's not very clear about what I used to feel, but I don't know if I'm any more unhappy now than before . . . I don't think so.

RENNY. You weren't unhappy. You were never unhappy.

JOHN. I couldn't swear to it, you know, but it seems to me that I was. I'll tell you why. If I wanted to, perhaps I could remember. Well, I don't try to; I have a feeling that it's better not to try . . . it's not worth it.

RENNY. Try a little, anyway.

JOHN. You want me to, Renny? Do you want me to? (*He searches painfully and with visible effort.*) One day Harvey . . . he was a great guy, Harvey . . . well, he put on a tan overcoat . . . the afternoon of the same day it rained . . . and poor old Perdriel didn't have any umbrella . . . Harvey's father was a general . . .

RENNY. Then what?

JOHN. Oh, Renny, how it tires me! I was feeling so well.

RENNY. Never mind, old boy, don't try any more. Are you fixing a fish-line?

JOHN. Yes. Mine broke yesterday. See how light and strong this one will be! You can pull as hard as you like and it won't break.

RENNY (*trying it, to please him.*) Well, have a good time, Johnny.

JOHN. Do you have much work to do these days, Renny?

RENNY. About as much as usual. Enough! I'm planning a country house for a man who wants to build near Saint Mary's. After that's done, I'll draw up plans for other men . . . and so on.

JOHN. You aren't very fond of your work, Renny.

RENNY. What makes you say that? I don't complain about it.

JOHN. But you do it without enthusiasm.

RENNY. Well, that's something else again.

JOHN. Why?

RENNY. Perhaps with time, one's taste for work is dulled.

JOHN. Yes, yes . . . I understand perfectly. Every day you do the same thing . . . you spend your life swimming about in a lake . . . You'd like to get out but you can't.

RENNY. That's it, old boy. You know, you see very clearly . . . and you say just what you see.

JOHN. Yes, I say what I see.

RENNY (*almost bitterly.*) Well, at least my work is worth something — it earns us all a living. I don't ask for anything more . . . Here, sharpen this pencil, will you, like a good fellow? (*There is a short pause.* JOHN *concentrates all his energies on whittling down the pencil.*)

JOHN. You know, I'm awfully grateful to you for working for me.

RENNY. Don't be silly. It makes me happy . . .

JOHN. Do you love me?

RENNY. Yes, I love you a great deal.

JOHN (*has just broken the lead.*) Isn't it a pity! I can't even help you. Even your pencils . . . see what I did to this one.

RENNY. Here, give it to me.

JOHN. Wait, I just broke the lead.

RENNY. Never mind. It's fine like that.

JOHN. Do you think so?

RENNY. Yes. Thanks.

JOHN. It's great to be able to work, even when you don't like your work. Don't get sick, Renny; take my word for it — I mean it seriously.

RENNY. But you worked too, John, much too hard. And you'll begin again as soon as you're well! It's just something to get over.

JOHN. I don't know. I couldn't say.

RENNY. Just wait and see.

JOHN. Think so?

RENNY. You made such a fine start.

JOHN. I made a fine start?

RENNY. You could have accomplished anything you wanted to.

JOHN. You don't say! And it was all the more remarkable since I was so young?

RENNY. Exactly.

JOHN. Yes . . . Only I was sidetracked.

RENNY. Temporarily.

JOHN. It's too bad, isn't it? I had such a good start! I don't remember anything about it, but if you say so! . . . It's too bad; yes, really, too, too bad! . . .

RENNY. You wanted to re-read your books. Have you done it yet?

JOHN. I made a stab at it. I read a little at a time. There are lots of little details which amuse me, and then, there are lots of others which I don't understand at all. I don't understand them because they don't make sense.

RENNY (*looking at him.*) Really?

JOHN. Really. (*He takes a book from the table and runs through it rapidly.*) I marked this with a pencil . . . Oh yes; here, read this.

RENNY (*reading.*)

"Weary love, love too weighty, too heavy,
Stretched taut like a tight-rope
Under a dancer's feet;
Weary love, full like the heart of a child,
Empty like a child's balloon,
Love crying misery, misery . . . " . .

(*He closes the book.*)

JOHN (*complacently.*) There, that doesn't make sense. I must have been awfully sick before going crazy.

RENNY. Don't worry about it.

JOHN. No, I guess I'll go fishing.

RENNY. Good luck.

JOHN. Oh, you know I never catch anything. They're so suspicious! They're timid, and they glide by so swiftly . . . like a knife-thrust in the water.

RENNY. You used to catch them.

JOHN. Yes, when I fished in the pond. Now I fish in the stream for souls, you know.

RENNY. Souls?

JOHN. Yes, that's their name. The fish are called sole.

RENNY. Ah yes; some kind of a trout?

JOHN. Swifter, Renny, swifter! I haven't yet managed to catch one. I bait them so carefully and you can't have better lines . . . but they aren't attracted at all, they glide by without pausing.

RENNY. Never mind, after a while you'll catch some.

JOHN. Oh, I'm patient; I can wait. (*He puts on his beret and gets up to go. Then, leaning on the table where* RENNY *has spread his blue-prints:*) Is it going to be a big house?

RENNY. Two stories high . . . about twelve rooms.

JOHN. I wonder in which of those rooms they'll die? (RENNY *shrugs.*) If you only knew, you could be particularly careful about that one.

RENNY. Yes, John, yes. (*There is a pause.*)

JOHN. You ought to get married, Renny.

RENNY. Do you think so?

JOHN. Yes, why not?

RENNY. My first attempt wasn't very successful . . .

JOHN. Did she make you very unhappy? Was she unfaithful to you, Renny?

RENNY (*a little uncomfortable.*) I don't exactly know, Johnny.

JOHN. Of course not. Once they begin to be unfaithful to you, you can never be sure again that they're telling you the truth. If I were you, I'd marry again just to find out.

RENNY. Haven't you thought of getting married?

JOHN. Oh, but I'm sick.

RENNY. What if you were better?

JOHN. I'll tell you what would stop me. Either I wouldn't love my wife and right off I'd know what she was like, and that would make me uncomfortable. Or else, I'd love her madly and then I'd never know; I'd never understand her. In that case I'd be frantic, trying to figure her out. See what I mean?

RENNY. Yes, John, I see.

MARY (*enters with a letter.*) Here's the letter to go to the castle. Your mother says you're to take it right away. (*She motions to* RENNY *to send* JOHN *away quickly.*)

JOHN. I'll go immediately. See you later, Renny; I'll be home for lunch.

RENNY. Run along.

JOHN (*from the doorway.*) Good-bye. (*He goes out.*)

MOTHER (*coming in like a hurricane.*) Has your brother gone? . . . Thank God! They're at the gate. I told you not to be late, Renny.

RENNY. Have they come already?

MOTHER. Your brother will run into them. What rotten luck! (*She goes to the window.*) Oh no, he's going through the vegetable garden. That's good . . . You may go, Mary . . . (*She is obviously upset.*) Here they are, Renny. (*There is a short pause. The* MOTHER *and* RENNY *stand waiting.* MGR. LESCURE *and* NELLY COISLIN *enter.* LESCURE, *tall and very erect, is sixty years old. His forehead is high and the hair-line receding.* NELLY COISLIN *is a very young girl, blonde, diffident, yet poised.*)

BISHOP. A friend of mine drove us down in his car. We were afraid that you had already sent someone to the

station. How are you, Madame? (*He holds out his hand. After hesitating briefly, she kisses the amethyst ring.* MARY, *hands crossed on her chest, curtsies. The* BISHOP *extends the ring to her.*)

MOTHER. How long it's been, Your Reverence!

BISHOP. A few years have passed, Madame.

MOTHER. And we have always been such good friends, Your Reverence.

BISHOP. I knew you when you were still wearing pig-tails, Madame.

MOTHER. And I can remember you in short trousers . . . Those were our happiest years, Your Reverence.

BISHOP. I am thankful that you remember me as a part of them.

MOTHER. My son, Renny, Your Reverence — the one who is well.

BISHOP. How do you do, sir?

RENNY (*bowing and shaking hands.*) I hope you had a pleasant trip, Your Reverence?

BISHOP. Very, thank you. (*Presenting* NELLY, *who has been standing apart.*) Miss Coislin.

NELLY. How do you do?

MOTHER. Miss Coislin . . . I would have preferred to meet you . . . under different circumstances . . . Well, it's happened like this . . . we can't do anything about it. But I want to thank you with all my heart for having come . . . it's very kind of you . . . together we'll try to . . . cheer up the poor boy! May I kiss you? Perhaps that will bring us both luck . . . I can assure you that today I'm the one who needs it most. (*They embrace.*)

NELLY. I didn't know that John was sick; I was very upset when I heard about it . . . We were very close friends.

MOTHER. His Reverence must have told you what we are hoping for. John never spoke to us about you. In looking through a little notebook, we found that you and he were, as you say, "very close friends" . . . Yes, indeed . . . Sometimes an unexpected pleasure gives an invalid a thrill of joy which does more for him than all the rest. So that . .

NELLY. If I could bring him any joy, I would — with all my heart.

MOTHER. Yes, of course . . . Did you have a pleasant trip, Miss Coislin?

NELLY. Yes, thank you.

MOTHER. We've had a nice room prepared for you. I hope that you won't have to leave too soon.

NELLY. Does John have to stay in bed?

MOTHER. No . . . no . . . no . . . he's just gone out.

NELLY. Gone out!

MOTHER. Yes . . . Oh, he goes out . . . He even looks very well.

NELLY (*a little astonished.*) Really! . . . Then what *is* wrong with him?

MOTHER. Didn't His Reverence warn you?

NELLY. His Reverence mentioned a complete nervous collapse.

MOTHER (*sadly, to* RENNY.) Must we tell her?

RENNY. Of course, Mother.

NELLY. I'd rather know.

MOTHER. It's not very easy for a mother to tell you. Take my word for it, it's very hard.

RENNY. His head is tired, Miss Coislin. He no longer retains all his faculties.

NELLY (*stunned.*) Oh, really . . .

RENNY. Yes . . . (*The young girl becomes pensive and sad.*)

MOTHER. Oh, he won't frighten you. He's even nicer than usual. Sometimes he talks quite sensibly too . . . Only he's forgotten almost everything that happened before his "attack". A few little recollections survive; but even they are confused in his mind.

NELLY. Oh!

MOTHER. I can tell you, it isn't cheerful. We hope . . . that in seeing you . . . perhaps the sound of your voice . . .

BISHOP (*in the last few moments he has been glancing through one of the books on the table.*) Are these his poems?

MOTHER. Yes. If you only knew how sad they are! . . . Have you read them, Miss Coislin?

NELLY (*evasively.*) He sent me his books.

MOTHER. Well, you, of all people, should read them.

He speaks more frequently in them of you than of me! (NELLY *does not answer.*) Why did you hurt my son so much, Miss Coislin?

NELLY. Madame, I don't think that I hurt him so much.

MOTHER. Weren't you as fond of him as you were of anyone else?

NELLY. We were very good friends.

MOTHER. Naturally . . . but that isn't what he wanted. I don't blame you for it, but it's because of you that he has become as he is.

RENNY. Mother . . .

NELLY. I have never hurt him, Madame.

BISHOP. He must have expected a great deal from you. He was no doubt very young.

NELLY. It's incredible . . . I . . . I can't believe it.

MOTHER. Had he never told you so?

NELLY. Oh yes, but words . . .

BISHOP. Read these poems that I've just finished.

NELLY. More words . . .

BISHOP. You are hard to convince.

MOTHER. And that, Your Reverence, he wrote for her! . . . Take this page, for example . . . Look.

BISHOP. Yes, it is filled with suffering. (*Handing the note-book to the young girl and indicating some passages.*) *"Vide Thomas! Vide latus . . ."*

NELLY. Perhaps I did hurt him a little . . . After a while, I didn't see him often.

MOTHER. Why not?

NELLY (*very frankly.*) When I first knew him, I . . . I was very fond of him. I enjoyed being with him. He enjoyed it too. He seemed happy, and so was I . . . almost.

MOTHER. Yes, of course . . . all you needed was time!

NELLY. Yes . . .

MOTHER. Well?

NELLY. He changed. He became so . . . so possessive! I hurt him without meaning to — or rather he hurt himself. He became morose, and I couldn't even be comfortable when I was near him.

BISHOP. Your relations became strained.

NELLY. Yes, yes . . . they grew daily more strained.

And he did nothing to improve matters.

BISHOP. He wrote morbid poetry?

NELLY. Yes . . .

BISHOP. That didn't help matters.

NELLY. No . . .

MOTHER. He always had an extremely complex nature.

BISHOP. There are some maladjusted natures; those are the ones that suffer most.

NELLY. I'm not sure that he suffered so much: when he spoke of being unhappy, it was to make fun of himself with almost offensive irony.

BISHOP. Doubtless he was proud: in that case, he suffered twice as much.

MOTHER. I'm sure he wanted to marry you!

NELLY. He did ask me.

BISHOP. He did ask her, but she was afraid.

NELLY (*makes no reply.*)

BISHOP. Weren't you?

NELLY. Yes . . . I was unwilling to endure his sickly ill humor . . . I was afraid . . . I couldn't bear it . . . I'm awfully sorry to hear that he's ill.

MOTHER. Yes, my son is sick. For his sake, be gentle with him. If, on seeing you again, he remembers a little of what he used to feel for you, don't disillusion him right away! . . . Good heavens, regardless of how we feel, we always have young men around who love us — or who think they do. We aren't annoyed with them because of that. But sometimes a kind word would have given them a little rest and patience . . . We say: "Yes, perhaps . . . " and we do nothing . . . Time takes care of it. Now that I'm older, I'm often sorry that I was so indifferent . . . Youth is cruel . . . don't you think so, Your Reverence?

BISHOP. Yes. (*He looks at her. There is a pause. No one finds anything to say. It strikes twelve.*)

MOTHER. Ah, dear God. (*With a heavy sigh, then changing the subject:*) Would you like to go to your room to rest?

BISHOP. Yes, thank you.

MOTHER. What are you looking at?

BISHOP. That portrait.

MOTHER. It's of me.

BISHOP. Yes, I know.

MOTHER. It *was* of me . . .

BISHOP. Yes.

MOTHER. It was taken at the beginning of my career.

BISHOP. I remember.

MOTHER. Bless the house, Your Reverence. (*The* BISHOP *blesses it. The* MOTHER *makes the sign of the cross.* RENNY *bows his head.* NELLY *dreams.*) Come this way, Your Reverence . . . Renny, take care of Miss Coislin. (*The* MOTHER *and the* BISHOP *go out.*) . . . .

RENNY. You're not too pleased with your job, are you?

NELLY (*shrugging her shoulders, does not answer.*)

RENNY. You can afford to spend a little time on this act of charity, can't you?

NELLY. My whole life's ahead of me.

RENNY. I hope you find something better to do with it . . . I mean, better for you.

NELLY. One never can tell.

RENNY. We wanted to try this for John's sake, as an experiment.

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY. Let's hope it works!

NELLY. Let's hope so.

RENNY. Don't you think it will?

NELLY. Why should the sight of me produce such an effect on him?

RENNY (*somewhat hesitantly.*) He loved you very much.

NELLY (*says nothing.*)

RENNY. Don't you believe it?

NELLY. I'm very incredulous. (RENNY *smiles faintly.*) Say it! Say it!

RENNY. What?

NELLY. What you were about to say. Whenever I admit that I'm . . . disillusioned, people tell me that at my age it's inappropriate. Go on, you say it too. (*There is a pause.*)

RENNY. As you see, I'm not saying anything of the sort. I am, like you, "very incredulous".

NELLY. Does that mean that you are unhappy?

RENNY. One way or the other, it's a habit.

NELLY. Yes . . . And it's not so important after all.

RENNY. Yes, yes, it is; at your age.

NELLY. I knew you'd come to it!

RENNY. It would be unfair for you to be unhappy.

NELLY. Think so?

RENNY. Yes . . . In this house, where you may feel more alone than elsewhere, won't you consider me your friend?

NELLY. Gladly.

RENNY. Thank you. (*There is a pause.*) Wasn't I wrong to suggest it?

NELLY. Wrong? Why?

RENNY. There is something rather ominous in friendship.

NELLY. For whom?

RENNY. Oh, Miss Coislin, I was only joking . . .

NELLY. Do you expect your brother back soon?

RENNY. He should be here now . . . Does it upset you to see him again?

NELLY. . . . No.

RENNY. If he weren't sick, would you have seen him again?

NELLY (*without conviction.*) . . . Yes.

RENNY. If the occasion had presented itself?

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY. Won't you admit that seeing him again upsets you a little?

NELLY. Yes, a little . . . (*She turns from him, ill at ease, and looks out into the garden.*) How colorful your garden is.

RENNY. It's the time of year . . . We *have* lovely dahlias. (*The young girl has placed her hat and gloves on the table.*)

MOTHER (*entering hurriedly.*) Renny! . . . Your brother! . . . He should meet her first alone . . . You'll forgive me, Miss Coislin? But he came back sooner than I expected . . . You don't mind? He's just come in!

NELLY. Whenever you like, Madame.

MOTHER. Then we'll leave you . . . Oh, Renny, if he should recognize her! . . . Go upstairs, leave your door

open if you like! You wouldn't object, would you, Miss Coislin? . . . I'll be in the other room with His Reverence. I want to see his reaction . . . Oh, how excited I am! . . . Go upstairs, Renny . . . Do be sweet to him, Miss Coislin: he loved you so! . . . Heavens, what will he do? What's he going to say? . . . Excuse me, Miss Coislin . . . (*She disappears;* RENNY *has gone upstairs and likewise disappeared.* NELLY *waits, a little upset. There is a pause.* JOHN'S *voice is heard caroling in the garden. He comes in, looks at* NELLY, *and then, without any more astonishment than that provoked by an agreeable surprise*:)

JOHN. Well! Nelly!

NELLY. Hello, John. (*She holds out her hand.*)

JOHN. Hello, Nelly. How are you?

MOTHER'S VOICE (*off-stage — exclaiming joyously.*) He recognized her!

JOHN (*undisturbed, and obviously delighted at the meeting, excited, voluble.*) You look marvelous.

NELLY. How long it's been! . . .

JOHN. Did you find my house without any trouble?

NELLY. Yes, thanks.

JOHN. If only you'd let me know you were coming, I'd have gone to the station to meet you.

NELLY. It didn't occur to me.

JOHN. Did your husband come with you?

NELLY. I'm not married.

JOHN. Aren't you?

NELLY. No.

JOHN. Aren't you, really?

NELLY. No.

JOHN. I was convinced you were! . . . Then I don't see why we don't see each other more often. There's no reason why not!

NELLY. There never was, John.

JOHN. Well, then, when you leave I'll go visit you in Paris very often. I'd love to.

NELLY. When I leave? Are you sending me away so soon?

JOHN. Oh, no! I'm only too glad to have you here! You're so pretty, Nelly . . . Renny was right after all, but I was sure you were married. I even saw your husband: he

looked like a cavalry horse; I didn't like him much. Oh, I'm very glad, very glad indeed! . . . Yes, you'll see me often in Paris. That is, as soon as I'm cured. Until I am, they won't let me go.

NELLY (*gingerly.*) Are you ill?

JOHN. Sort of.

NELLY. What's wrong with you?

JOHN. Me? Oh, I'm crazy.

NELLY (*quickly.*) Oh, no!

JOHN. Yes! But I know it. So many others are and don't!

NELLY. You can't be serious!

JOHN. If I were crazy and serious at the same time, it would be too much for me! . . . Looking at me?

NELLY. Yes. I'm looking at you.

JOHN. How do you think I look? Do I look badly?

NELLY. On the contrary. You seem more rested than you used to be.

JOHN. I am; very rested.

NELLY. You look calmer . . . less worried.

JOHN. I haven't any worries. Of course, I'd like to see Renny married, and old Mary less religious, but I haven't any real worries.

NELLY. I'm sure you don't have those fits of despair any more.

JOHN. Fits of despair? Good heavens, did I have any? Oh, no! I haven't them any more . . . I haven't any hope either. What about you? Are you quite happy?

NELLY (*evasively.*) Yes.

JOHN. You don't say it right.

NELLY. I'm bored . . .

JOHN. Why?

NELLY. If there were a reason, there'd be a cure.

JOHN (*suddenly sad.*) Little one . . . little one . . .

NELLY. Oh! It's nothing to grow tender about; it's not serious!

JOHN. It upsets me.

NELLY. Really?

JOHN. Really. Then you're not happy?

NELLY. I'm not unhappy either.

JOHN. Listen, you ought to get married.

NELLY. What nonsense!

JOHN. Yes . . . Yes, you should.

NELLY (*looking at him.*) Do you really want me to get married?

JOHN. I'd be a little sorry if you were to say to me: "You're right, Johnny, I'm going to get married", because then I'd think: "Now she's gone, and I'll never see her again." But that shouldn't stop you, you know. People in my condition can do without lots of things.

NELLY. John, I haven't the slightest intention of getting married. I don't even want to.

JOHN. You shouldn't mind telling me . . .

NELLY. Of course not . . .

JOHN. All right, then! . . . We'll have to find a cure for your boredom elsewhere!

NELLY. Why bother?

JOHN. Yes, indeed. Come, now, what exactly do you feel?

NELLY (*infinitely weary.*) I feel as if I were as old as God.

JOHN. Yes, that must be awkward. I can't quite understand. Then what?

NELLY. Oh, I don't know. I don't want anything badly any more.

JOHN. Why not?

NELLY. I don't know what to wish for.

JOHN. What would you say if you were in my position; it's forbidden me to wish for anything.

NELLY. Forbidden?

JOHN (*a little wistfully.*) Because I'm sick. I'd be afraid of wishing for something silly, and of realizing it afterwards. That would make me unhappy. But to return to you, tell me what would make you happy?

NELLY. If I ever find out, I'll tell you, Johnny!

JOHN (*with childish glee.*) There, you see! . . . If you don't find out, that'll prove that you're sick, too.

NELLY. What?

JOHN. Yes, and then they'll have to take care of you . . . Have you good friends? And faithful, devoted servants?

NELLY (*wistful, in her turn.*) I never put them to the test.

JOHN. Then you can't count on them! . . . Oh, Nelly! Do you know what we're going to do? I'm going to ask them to take care of us together. Would you like that? . . . Then the one who is cured first will wait for the other.

NELLY (*laughing.*) It's a bargain.

JOHN. Promise?

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. I'll do everything I can . . . I'll do it to thank you for having come.

NELLY. I didn't make a mistake by coming?

JOHN. Absolutely not! I thought about you often! But my memory isn't very strong, and perhaps . . . if I hadn't seen you again . . . I'd have forgotten you altogether. (*With abandon and joy.*) You were right to come! I'm so glad! I want to kiss you! (*He kisses her several times, laughing the while. She acquiesces, unprotesting.*) Do you like fly-fishing?

NELLY. I don't know.

JOHN. I'll take you with me soul-fishing! Wait a second. (*He calls.*) Mary! Oh, Mary! . . . You must meet the bishop; he's like a . . . No, I've got him confused with the colonel.

MARY (*coming in.*) Yes, sir?

JOHN. You'll put this lady beside me at table, facing the window . . . and, in winter, you'll put her near the fireplace. (MARY *goes out without answering him.*)

NELLY. In winter? But how long do you expect to keep me here?

JOHN. Until you're completely cured. I insist! . . . Until you can say to me: "There's a lovely thing, Johnny, and I want it. I'm going after that lovely, lovely thing." Then I'll say: "Go ahead, Nelly, don't waste a minute! Go ahead!"

NELLY. You'll be cured long before that! Otherwise I wouldn't leave you!

JOHN. Oh, I'm not particular: I take what people give me, and I give what I have! . . . I must show you a grand fishing line I made this morning! (*He bounds up the stairs*

and disappears. NELLY *watches the door through which he has gone with a tender smile.*)

NELLY (*very gently.*) He is so very sweet . . .

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

A week later. Four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon. When the curtain rises, JOHN, *much absorbed, is writing on his knees, using a book as a support.* NELLY *enters.*

NELLY. What are you doing?

JOHN (*hiding the paper.*) I was drawing.

NELLY. You looked as if you were writing.

JOHN. Well, I was explaining the drawing.

NELLY. Let me see!

JOHN. No. It's not finished yet.

NELLY. Will you show it to me later?

JOHN. Perhaps.

NELLY. Why perhaps?

JOHN. Ssh! . . . Listen to the chimes. (*Solicitously.*) Are you feeling well?

NELLY. Yes, thanks.

JOHN. Good! That's the most important thing. I feel fine, too. I'm much better than I was. When we both feel well, you'll see how simple life will be! And when that time comes, I'll tell you what else we must do.

NELLY. Are you a good boy this morning, Johnny?

JOHN. Me? Yes. (*She holds out her hand to him. He plays with her finger-tips.*) I love long hands.

NELLY. You have nice hands, too.

JOHN. They're not bad.

NELLY. What's that little white mark?

JOHN. Oh! A fish-hook got caught in the skin. I didn't bother to take care of the wound.

NELLY. If I'd been here, I'd have taken care of it.

JOHN (*really revolted.*) Oh, no! I don't like to see people take care of each other . . .

NELLY. Why not?

JOHN. It makes me sick — the way I feel when I see people who are sad.

NELLY. It's not their fault.

JOHN. I'm not blaming them. Only I'd advise them to take a cure: it's sickly. (*She laughs.*) Really, I mean it. Now don't you feel brighter than the day you came?

NELLY. Yes, John.

JOHN. There! You see! I told you so!

NELLY (*looking at him fondly.*) Yes, dear.

JOHN. You must believe me. I see much more clearly than other people because I lead a simple life and because I have nothing to distract me. Other people lead such complicated lives, while I only try to find the way to be as happy as possible. Consequently, you can trust me. Can't you?

NELLY (*very confidently.*) Yes . . .

JOHN. You don't want to go away yet?

NELLY. No.

JOHN. You know, as soon as you want to . . .

NELLY. But I don't.

JOHN. That's fine. Then what I'm planning can be very easily worked out.

NELLY. What are you planning?

JOHN. I'll tell you some day soon — or rather, any minute now! . . . Coming fishing with me?

NELLY. No, I'm so awkward that I frighten away the fish.

JOHN. Yes, you do frighten them. I'll go by myself later. You won't mind if I leave you for a while?

NELLY. No. (*She looks at him very tenderly.*) Do you like to go fishing so much?

JOHN. Not so much for the last week, since you came; but before that I had very little else to do.

NELLY. Well, now you have two interests: your fish — and me.

JOHN. Are you jealous? You mustn't be! . . . From time to time. I must go to see the fish out of gratitude! Oh,

above all, never be ungrateful! . . . For instance, you must go back once in a while to play old games that no longer amuse you. Oh no, one can't be ungrateful . . . So, from time to time, I go see my fish for a little while.

NELLY. You aren't cruel, are you?

JOHN. Oh, no!

NELLY. You are kind.

JOHN. I've never thought about it.

NELLY. Would you be kind for me?

JOHN (*smiling gravely.*) Yes, for your sake, because you want someone to be kind to you.

NELLY. Oh! You think so?

JOHN. I know it! You want it and you need it.

NELLY. I don't need anything.

JOHN. Oh, but you do! You are a little thing. You don't realize it, but I know it's true.

NELLY. I'm stronger than you think.

JOHN. But not so strong as you say! You are bold, like the child who wants to jump over the brook all alone: "Don't help me! Don't help me!" He doesn't want to take anybody's hand! . . . You are proud. You can't bear to seem to hesitate. But you would be glad if someone strong were beside you when you were about to jump.

NELLY. Well . . . perhaps.

JOHN. There's no perhaps. You are bold and timid.

NELLY. Maybe . . .

JOHN. You are.

NELLY. You understand me so well here!

JOHN. Here? What do you mean "here"?

NELLY. Before, you were less penetrating.

JOHN. Really? . . . I don't remember.

NELLY. You almost seemed to do it on purpose.

JOHN. That's strange! . . . Tell me about it.

NELLY. You didn't understand me, that's all. Or rather, everything that I did, you understood in the wrong way.

JOHN. Did it amuse me?

NELLY. No, you were upset, and you blamed it on me.

JOHN. Didn't I try to make us understand each other better?

NELLY. You used to ask me questions.

JOHN. And what happened?

NELLY. I answered them, and still you didn't understand.

JOHN. Oh! That's because I listened to the words! . . I took the words as an answer. I don't any more.

NELLY. You still ask me questions.

JOHN. Yes! . . . But the answer isn't in the words. It's in a glance of your eyes, in the curve of your mouth, a gesture . . . the way you play with the folds of your skirt or touch your belt . . . Words! They're a mask one uses! (*She looks at him.*) You answered me long ago. You've answered questions that I never asked you.

NELLY. It's so strange that you understand me better now.

JOHN. I understand you better because I don't pay any attention to what you say.

NELLY. Really?

JOHN. I understand you very well . . . (*He looks at her.*) There's only one thing that puzzles me.

NELLY. What is it?

JOHN. I can't tell what you're like. What *are* you like? Whom? . . . Usually, at first glance . . . (*He looks at her searchingly.*) We are the only two who aren't like anything! (*He holds out his hands and she gives him hers.*) There, vespers are over.

NELLY. Yes . . .

JOHN. Oh! What a beautiful Sunday! I'm happy! And you?

NELLY. So am I.

JOHN (*from the door to the garden.*) I'll see you soon.

NELLY. I'm going to read while I wait for you. (*She shows him one of his own books.*)

JOHN (*stopping abruptly.*) My book? . . . No! You can't read it! . . . No! (*He snatches it almost brutally from the young girl's hands.*)

NELLY. Let me have it.

JOHN. No! It doesn't mean anything. I wrote it when I was sick! I don't want to see it. (*He tears it up.*) There! . . . Read something else.

NELLY. You've torn up your book?

JOHN. Yes . . . (*He smiles mysteriously.*) Perhaps I'll write another.

NELLY. Really?

JOHN. Ah! but I don't promise anything.

NELLY (*joyfully.*) Yes, you must. You're planning to! Have you begun? (*He smiles like a man who does not want to say any more.*) You were writing a little while ago!

JOHN. Ssh!

NELLY. When will you show it to me?

JOHN. We'll see . . . we'll see . . . Some time soon.

NELLY. Please make it soon!

JOHN. I promise. (*She smiles at him tenderly.*) I believe everything is going to work out very well. Do you trust me?

NELLY (*looking at him gravely, then very sincerely.*) Yes.

JOHN. I'll be back. I'm going to try to catch a "soul". (*As he is about to leave,* RENNY *appears.*)

RENNY. Are you going out?

JOHN (*in contemplation before him.*) What a handsome brother I have! And what a beautiful tie my brother has bought . . . Every day my brother becomes more and more beautiful!

RENNY. Oh, shut up!

JOHN. It's very becoming. . . . So long. (*With a bound, he is outside. He is heard laughing in the garden.*)

RENNY. What a child!

NELLY. He's so . . .

RENNY. So what?

NELLY. So sweet.

RENNY. Naturally. Poor fellow! Sunday is a long day, isn't it?

NELLY. Not all Sundays are alike.

RENNY. My Sundays have always been interminable. The Lord's day is a bad day for His creatures. (NELLY *smiles politely.*)

NELLY. There are some people who enjoy Sunday.

RENNY. Yes . . . the old doddards who listen to military bands in the public park.

NELLY (*laughing.*) You exaggerate!

RENNY. Well, children too, sometimes . . . some children . . . a lot of children . . . (*She laughs.*) Perhaps some very fine people do when they're old. Why not?

NELLY. Yes, why not?

RENNY. After all, the days are empty when you don't have anything to fill them with.

NELLY. Exactly.

RENNY. I have only my work. The days when I don't work . . . (*A silence.*)

NELLY. You aren't very gay.

RENNY. It's the only thing I'd ask to be.

NELLY. Your mother was saying the other day that if you want to try enough, you have a very promising future ahead of you. (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) Isn't it true?

RENNY. It was. A few years ago, when I had a purpose, I was very ambitious. But the time comes very quickly when our old ambitions go to join our old clothes . . . But there is no doubt that at that time, I had a very good chance. Now . . .

NELLY. It's too late?

RENNY. That's putting it a little too strongly.

NELLY. Oh! I didn't mean . . .

RENNY. I know. (*Trying to convey a slowly mounting enthusiasm.*) It isn't too late. If I pulled myself together, I could make up for lost time, I could still . . . obviously . . . become a fairly well-known architect . . . I think I could.

NELLY (*without enthusiasm.*) Yes . . . probably . . .

RENNY. But I would never make the effort just for myself.

NELLY (*makes no comment.*)

RENNY. To have someone in your life . . . you'll see.

NELLY (*on the defensive.*) No doubt.

RENNY. Do you think this person can be found?

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY. But to find is one thing; to keep . . . or to recapture, is another . . . You'll see.

NELLY. I'll see. (*There is a pause.*)

RENNY. You are young. It frightens me a little to see you so young.

NELLY. It frightens you?

RENNY. For your sake. What's going to happen to you?

NELLY. Well, time will tell . . .

RENNY. May I ask you something?

NELLY. Well . . . what is it?

RENNY. You don't mistrust me, do you?

NELLY. No . . .

RENNY (*a bit clumsily.*) Is there anyone you especially care for?

NELLY. Especially?

RENNY. There's no young man — or rather, there's no man — of whom you're thinking seriously?

NELLY. No.

RENNY. Well, it's possible . . . (*With an effort and as jovially as possible.*) You aren't thinking of a marriage?

NELLY (*feeling that something is coming.*) What marriage?

RENNY. Of a marriage . . . you aren't planning to get married?

NELLY. I haven't thought about it at all.

RENNY. . . . You would make a charming wife. (*She laughs, a little ill at ease. He becomes silent.*)

NELLY (*to change the tone of the conversation.*) What about your brother who insists on watching his fish all day?

RENNY. My brother doesn't know how happy he is.

NELLY. What happiness does he have?

RENNY. He is oblivious.

NELLY (*quickly.*) That's unjust!

RENNY. Not at all. No one loves him more than I!

NELLY. Ah!

RENNY (*calmer and somewhat ironical.*) You defend him before he's attacked. (NELLY *lowers her eyes.*) Were you always so just to him? Perhaps you feel a little remorseful?

NELLY (*raising her head.*) No.

RENNY. What is it, then?

NELLY. I'm fond of him.

RENNY. You should be. (*There is a pause.* NELLY *gets up and starts towards the stairs.*) What are you going to do with such a long Sunday?

NELLY. I have to write a letter.

RENNY. Would you like to go for a little walk?

NELLY. I should write.

RENNY. As you like. (*He takes a few steps in the room.*) I'm going to work for a while.

NELLY. Enthusiastically?

RENNY. No . . . yes . . . Oh, well . . . (*He looks at her.*) It seems to me that I had something to say to you . . .

NELLY (*turning around indifferently.*) Did you?

RENNY. I've forgotten . . . I'll tell you later.

NELLY. All right.

RENNY. Yes . . . I'll tell you later. (*She smiles faintly and goes out. A pause. The* MOTHER *and the* BISHOP *enter.*)

MOTHER. You should have come to vespers, Renny. His Reverence delivered the sermon. And the priest was charming to me.

RENNY. I was putting some papers in order. I hope His Reverence won't hold it against me.

MOTHER. Well, if you haven't anything better to do . . . Where's your brother?

RENNY. In the meadow. He's fishing.

MOTHER. And Miss Coislin?

RENNY. In her room.

MOTHER. His Reverence is having dinner with us tonight. I kept him by sheer force.

RENNY. Really? . . . Please excuse me, Your Reverence.

BISHOP. Certainly. (RENNY *goes toward the stairs.*)

MOTHER. You look upset.

RENNY. Yes . . . I have a slight headache.

MOTHER. Oh, poor boy! (*He has gone out.*) I don't know what's the matter with him . . . Well! (*She draws up a chair and sits near the* BISHOP.) I'm delighted that the priest saw us leave together.

BISHOP. Really?

MOTHER. Yes . . . Here am I, exalted in his eyes and in the opinion of the whole country-side. Oh, there's no trouble between the priest and ourselves . . . he's an excellent man. But I believe his Faith is a little too blind.

BISHOP. That doesn't make it less strong.

MOTHER. Yes, I'm greatly pleased. I didn't dare go to church, and sometimes I missed it. I fell into the habit when

I was a child; I went to a convent school. My parents were very religious. Yours too? Naturally!

BISHOP. My mother was brought up in a convent. But my father was a radical free-thinker, and, after marriage, Mother ceased thinking about God so as not to disagree with her husband.

MOTHER. When I began to sing, my poor father thought I was lost. He never really forgave me.

BISHOP. Don't let it upset you. Mine thought that I was making the worst possible mistake. There are two fathers who weren't proud of their children!

MOTHER. Bless them, the poor dears! We're as old as they were . . . a little older.

BISHOP. I was thinking of that. (NELLY *comes out of her room.*) Good evening, Nelly.

NELLY. Good evening, Your Reverence. I'm going to mail a letter.

MOTHER. But, my dear, Mary will mail it for you.

NELLY. No, thank you. I'm going to hunt for John on the way.

MOTHER. Yes, do, that will please him. (NELLY *smiles and goes out.*) She is a charming child!

BISHOP. Charming, yes.

MOTHER. They would have made a delightful couple. Nothing of this sort would ever have happened. Obviously this young girl never understood my son.

BISHOP. Don't hold it against her, Madame. Misunderstandings often occur.

MOTHER. Yes. Oh, I know that! You make so many mistakes when you are young . . . and how you pay for them afterwards! All my trouble was caused by my marriage. I don't think one could possibly marry more stupidly than I. *Why* did I marry George? Why? I ask myself that all the time . . . Are you looking at me?

BISHOP. I am thinking of the time when you were young.

MOTHER. Oh, yes! . . . That's a long time ago! . . . You seem sad, Your Reverence.

BISHOP. Perhaps it has been more difficult for me than for you.

MOTHER. To grow old?

BISHOP. To see you grow old.

MOTHER. How strange! Don't you mind growing old?

BISHOP. On the contrary, I welcome it.

MOTHER. Well, I can scarcely say as much for myself.

BISHOP. I have wanted it with all my heart.

MOTHER. But, Your Reverence, you have a more exalted conception of things. You live near God.

BISHOP. Near and far, Madame.

MOTHER. Far?

BISHOP. He and I are face to face, and I live respecting His Holy Name, but I'm not sure that I hear Him as He would wish to be heard.

MOTHER. When one has Faith . . when one has Faith . .

BISHOP. You must be born with it. The Faith you create for yourself is like all human creations: full of imperfections.

MOTHER. Have you no Faith?

BISHOP. I have one that I have made for myself. I'm not sure what it is worth.

MOTHER. Strange!

BISHOP. Is it?

MOTHER. And yet you have become a bishop.

BISHOP. Yes.

MOTHER. You astonish me, Your Reverence, you really do.

BISHOP. I see you with your two grown sons. You knit wool caps for the children in the orphanage. You are going to leave me in a moment to give your maid instructions for dinner . . . I'm a little astonished, too.

MOTHER. Why did you take orders if you were not "called"?

BISHOP (*does not reply.*)

MOTHER. Is it a secret?

BISHOP. It would be a long story.

MOTHER. Tell me! I have told you all my trials and tribulations. At our age, we can talk about our lives without embroidering them.

BISHOP. Are you still a tease?

MOTHER. A tease?

BISHOP. You used to be, you know.

MOTHER (*a gesture saying, "That's so long ago."*) You should talk . . .

BISHOP. Do you remember me when I was young?

MOTHER. Yes.

BISHOP. What was I like?

MOTHER. Charming. You were a charming young man, just as you had been a well-behaved little boy . . . I remember, you took all the prizes in your class.

BISHOP. A serious little boy?

MOTHER. You didn't make much noise.

BISHOP. No.

MOTHER. You used to play very gravely and discreetly.

BISHOP. And as a young man?

MOTHER. I don't know what you did; whatever it was, I'm sure you did it just as gravely and discreetly.

BISHOP. Yes.

MOTHER. And I was so wild!

BISHOP. That was all right because it was you. People loved to watch you.

MOTHER. I was good-hearted.

BISHOP. You were very affectionate.

MOTHER (*absently.*) Yes, I was very fond of you.

BISHOP. I'm not referring to the affection you showed me.

MOTHER. Why not?

BISHOP. Because you never showed me any. You forgot me. I was too serious.

MOTHER. Is that a reproach?

BISHOP. It's the beginning of my story. I'm going back to primary causes. (*The* MOTHER *looks at him.*) Understand? (*She still looks at him, then, absolutely astonished:*)

MOTHER. No!

BISHOP. Yes, Madame, when we were young, I loved you.

MOTHER. My God . . . and it's true, too, you told me so!

BISHOP. Had you forgotten?

MOTHER. Completely.

BISHOP. I remembered longer than you.

MOTHER. I couldn't have realized that you were speaking seriously.

BISHOP. Particularly on that day, I didn't look like someone who is joking.

MOTHER. I mustn't have looked at you.

BISHOP. Ai!

MOTHER. What?

BISHOP. Nothing.

MOTHER. My poor friend, I was so young.

BISHOP. So was I.

MOTHER. Yes, but you! . . . You were always intelligent.

BISHOP. Don't overwhelm me.

MOTHER. I was too much in love with life; I couldn't love any one person. There was no room in my dreams for any one but myself . . . And then too, that was the time when I was just beginning to sing.

BISHOP. Yes . . . The last time I saw you as a young girl was at your debut. Between the acts, I went backstage to see you.

MOTHER. Really?

BISHOP. I forgive you for not remembering: that day, you didn't see me.

MOTHER. Did you hide?

BISHOP. No. I was standing in the middle of the room. You, of course, were surrounded by friends. I got in everybody's way, I towered over everyone, and I was the only person who was invisible.

MOTHER. That's very funny!

BISHOP. Today! . . . Two hours before, I had dressed with painstaking care. One of your friends watched me with a malicious grin. Oh, I acted like a clumsy lout and you didn't come to my aid.

MOTHER. Really?

BISHOP. No. You said: "See you soon", and gave me a very indifferent hand. But I had just sworn to myself that I would never come back. There was still another act. I returned to my seat, you went back to the stage, and sitting there, I watched you leave.

MOTHER. But, inside, I was still so young. I really hadn't gone away.

BISHOP. Like most "intelligent" young people, I believed in appearances.

MOTHER. Good heavens! How blind we are!

BISHOP. We don't make much effort to see.

MOTHER. But why did you take orders?

BISHOP. Had I had the voice, I would doubtless have tried to become a great tenor and beat you at your own game. But I hadn't the voice.

MOTHER. So?

BISHOP. Had it been the thing to do, I would have tried to become a famous captain or a rich trader. But it wasn't the time for such things; besides, I had no military ambitions.

MOTHER. I don't understand.

BISHOP. I took orders to astonish *you,* and to be able to dominate you some day.

MOTHER. To dominate me? . . . What kind of a confession is this, Your Reverence?

BISHOP. It was my pride. You'll see how I was punished for it. I spent years of my youth picturing our eventual meeting.

MOTHER. What did you expect?

BISHOP. I expected that you would find me handsome — and tall — far more important than you. I would give you a friendly little nod. It would all have been rather pathetic, because a priest is cut off from the world. But I would have felt that my painful youth was paid for.

MOTHER. Your Reverence . . . Your Reverence . . .

BISHOP. Nothing was paid for. I rose very quickly: I was certainly the youngest bishop in France. A few years more, and you would have bowed before the red hat of a Prince of the Church . . . But I saw you again too soon.

MOTHER. When was that?

BISHOP. At the marriage of one of your relatives. Do you remember?

MOTHER. Yes. But why was that too soon?

BISHOP. Madame, I had dreamed of the day when, after years, I should appear before you in all my glorious isolation. I realized that *I* would be well past my prime. But on the day when I planned to give you an audience, I had pictured you still young. One doesn't think of everything in a dream.

MOTHER. Well?

BISHOP. I saw you before I had planned . . . Madame, you had changed a little . . . you had grown a little older. It was to be expected . . . Since that meeting, I have had no more ambitions. (*There is a long silence.*)

MOTHER. I have heard that you made an excellent bishop. One day in a train two old women were speaking of your kindness, your sincerity . . .

BISHOP. The diocese makes the bishop.

MOTHER. You aren't bitter, are you?

BISHOP. We burn many things, Madame, along with the incense.

MOTHER. Your life is not too empty?

BISHOP. Empty? No, Madame. I learned to love my cathedral . . . which is very beautiful . . . to respect my daily work and the daily bread of others. Sometimes I was able to instill into others the full and complete Faith which was not given me. I have looked for God; I have succeeded in thinking less of myself, which is to come a little nearer Him.

MOTHER (*gently.*) Your Reverence . . .

BISHOP. It is only a story, Madame. I told it to you only to make you feel the vanity of certain youthful ambitions which a weak spirit can never discard because it is always swayed by too great pride.

MOTHER. My poor friend. (*She makes an affectionate gesture and starts to take his hand. But, anticipating the movement, he quickly extends his ring to her. Voices are heard in the garden.*) I hear "youth".

BISHOP. Yes . . .

MOTHER. I must speak to Mary about the dinner. Come into the library, you'll be more comfortable there.

BISHOP. As you wish. (*They go out. Laughter off-stage. One can guess that the two young people are racing up through the garden.* NELLY *and* JOHN *come bounding in.*)

JOHN. Here are the two lovely children! . . . Oh! No one's here!

NELLY. I thought I saw . . .

JOHN. You saw wrong.

NELLY. You made me run!

JOHN. I ran too.

NELLY. Yes, but you!

JOHN. You're as quick as a frightened animal!

NELLY (*pretending to fall down, exhausted.*) I'm dead . .

JOHN (*catching her in his arms.*) A little captured animal. (*He kisses her. She does not resist.*)

NELLY. John!

JOHN. Are you annoyed?

NELLY. I thought someone was coming.

JOHN. No, they'll let us alone . . .

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. They're right. We're perfect alone. (*He kisses her again.*)

NELLY (*softly.*) John . . .

JOHN. I like to kiss you because you're pretty . . . yes, my little friend is pretty . . . (*Very sweetly and happily.*) Oh, you do look well; the run did you good. (*They look at each other, smiling.*) Nelly . . .

NELLY. Yes?

JOHN. Listen to me and answer me truthfully. Have you been happy today?

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. You haven't missed anything?

NELLY. No.

JOHN. Would you live this day over again if you could?

NELLY. Yes, I would.

JOHN. From the very beginning?

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. Just as it's been, all alone with me?

NELLY. I came here for you.

JOHN. Without taking back the kisses you just gave me? (*She does not reply, but moves nearer him.*) Good! You would do it again!

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. Then you must stay here.

NELLY. Yes, of course, I'll stay awhile.

JOHN. Longer!

NELLY. That would be a little hard.

JOHN. Why?

NELLY. I'm not even your little cousin once removed.

JOHN. I have an idea!

NELLY. What is it?

JOHN. Why don't we get married? Nelly, I'd love to marry you.

NELLY. You're crazy!

JOHN (*calmly.*) Yes, but that's only a question of time.

NELLY (*looking at him.*) Get married?

JOHN. Say yes! It would please everybody. Mother would be so happy to go to a wedding! . . . She doesn't get much amusement.

NELLY. You're joking!

JOHN. No! I swear I'm not! What do you say? What do you think of it? . . . Don't hesitate. I think it's a good idea, and a grand thing for you. If it doesn't please you, say so. We'll think of something else.

NELLY (*badly upset.*) John.

JOHN. You could make a better marriage. You could make a worse. For my part, I advise you to marry me — you'll never know anyone with such a flair for being happy.

NELLY. I'd like to be happy, too . . . I never have been very much.

JOHN. Well then! You shouldn't hesitate. (*Holding out his hand.*) We'll get married?

NELLY (*smiling.*) Must you always win?

JOHN. Well, it's the sensible thing. Do you agree?

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. I'm delighted! Oh, I'm going to be very happy .. Nelly, we'll get along beautifully! . . . We'll be married as soon as I'm well!

NELLY. As soon as you are well.

JOHN. Until then, you'll live here as you are now. Once married, we'll have a house of our own! . . .

NELLY. Once married . . . yes.

JOHN. I'm glad, Nelly . . .

NELLY. Are you?

JOHN (*looking at her and drawing a paper from his pocket.*) I sort of felt that you would say yes. I was so sure, that I wrote a poem for you.

NELLY. A poem!

JOHN. Yes, here. Read it.

NELLY. John, you've been able to write poetry?

JOHN. Yes, I work over them a lot; I have scraps of

them in all my pockets . . . I think you'll like them. They're beautiful . . . I'm not conceited — you know that — but no one else could have written them because no one else knows himself as well as I. People, for the most part, are very confused when they're thinking about themselves.

NELLY (*a little frightened.*) Yes. (*She reads.*)

"I see a white house
Set in a green lawn,
I see thy white gown
Through the flowering trees.
I see thee with me,
I see me with thee,
. . . I've caught thy pale likeness as fast as can be."

JOHN. Well? . . . Do you like it?

NELLY. I'll keep it.

JOHN. Oh! I know I can write more like that! Now! With you! . . . "I see a white house . . . " It's ours, Nelly! . . . Nelly . . . what a lovely thing you are . . . You're my fiancée, Nelly.

NELLY. Yes, John. (*He holds her with one arm. Close to each other, they look straight before them, as if in a mirror.*)

JOHN. There they are, both of them! . . . He's a little bigger than she, but she's much prettier . . . They don't look naughty . . .

NELLY. They aren't naughty.

JOHN. She's leaning a little bit against him . . .

NELLY. Because he's the stronger . . .

JOHN. They don't take up much room . . .

NELLY. They take up still less now . . .

JOHN. They won't need a big house. Nelly, Nelly, let's go "home" tomorrow! (*She nods her head.*) *He says with a fervor which transforms the words:*)

"I see a white house
Set in a green lawn,
I see thy white gown
Through the flowering trees.
I see thee with me,
I see me with thee,
. . . I've caught thy pale likeness as fast as can be."

NELLY (*deeply moved.*) Poor Johnny.

JOHN. Poor? What do you mean? Happy! Happy! Happy! And you, are you happy too?

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. I knew it! People who are dissatisfied need only come to me for advice! . . . Oh, I'm so glad that our affairs are straightened out!

NELLY (*timidly.*) Johnny, you talk about our getting married, but you haven't said . . . you haven't told me . . . Johnny, do you love me?

JOHN (*taken aback.*) . . . Oh!

NELLY. What?

JOHN. Oh, I thought for a minute I knew what you're like! . . . No, it was just an idea . . . It crossed my mind like a flash . . . it's gone now.

NELLY. Do you want me to "be like" something?

JOHN. No, no . . . I love you as you are . . .

NELLY. You do love me?

JOHN. Of course I love you. (*She looks at him and then throws herself in his arms and kisses him passionately.* RENNY *comes in. The girl pulls away abruptly.*)

RENNY (*in spite of himself.*) That's a wicked game!

JOHN. What did you say, Renny?

RENNY (*catching hold of himself.*) Nothing, little one.

JOHN (*joyously.*) Renny!

RENNY. What?

JOHN. My fiancée. We're going to be married!

RENNY. Really?

JOHN. Soon!

RENNY (*with an effort.*) That's fine, Johnny. My congratulations.

JOHN. . . . I'm going to tell the news to mother . . . And to His Reverence too! . . . Oh! Nelly, I thought of it before; he can marry us; he'd love to do it: he's a good friend of the family . . . I'll be back!

NELLY. Don't be long.

JOHN (*to* RENNY.) Isn't she pretty? I wrote some poems for her; she'll let you read them.

RENNY (*picking up a page of the torn book.*) What does this mean? Are you tearing up your books now?

JOHN (*glancing at the page and then going out.*) That? . . That doesn't mean anything. (*He goes out. A long pause.*)

RENNY. I thank you for his sake.

NELLY. Oh!

RENNY. It's very kind of you to play so well.

NELLY. Why not? It doesn't cost me anything.

RENNY. . . . Because it *is* only a game?

NELLY (*does not answer.*)

RENNY. A game to amuse an invalid?

NELLY. . . . Yes, a game . . . (*She drops her head.*)

RENNY. Do I bore you?

NELLY (*sadly.*) No.

RENNY. Yes. I can feel that I bore you. (*Then gravely and bitterly:*) If you only knew . . .

(*She is not listening. He sees it and is silent.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

The next day. Five o'clock in the afternoon. Outside, the sky is a stormy gray. JOHN, *at the piano, is drumming out an unrecognizable air which he also sings loudly.* RENNY *enters, frowning and upset. An irritated look at his brother. He strides up and down the room.* JOHN *watches him without stopping his playing or his singing.*)

JOHN. What have you lost, Renny?

RENNY. Lost? Nothing.

JOHN. You look as if you were hunting something.

RENNY. Nothing.

JOHN (*loudly.*) Fa, sol, la . . . fa, mi, re, do, la . . . fa, sol, la, do, la, la, la . . .

RENNY (*furious.*) For God's sake!

JOHN. What's the matter?

RENNY. You're making an awful racket!

JOHN (*calmly.*) I'm playing myself some music.

RENNY. You're banging, little one, you're banging!

JOHN. I'm very gay.

RENNY. Well, you're damned noisy about it.

JOHN (*beginning to understand.*) Does the music upset you?

RENNY. No, no. Go ahead.

JOHN. It's a fierce rain, isn't it? You can't even put your nose outside.

RENNY. No.

JOHN. Fa, sol, la . . . fa, mi, re, do, do, la . . .

RENNY. For heaven's sake, be quiet, will you? Just for five minutes! How do you expect someone to listen to you pound on that piano, when . . .

JOHN. When?

RENNY. When one doesn't want to listen to music.

JOHN. All right. (*There is a pause.*) Why do you want to keep me from enjoying myself?

RENNY. There's no pleasure for you in pounding the keys like that. If you knew how to play, that would be different, but you don't . . . so stop playing.

JOHN. It seems to me I did know how.

RENNY. Well, wait until you remember.

JOHN. All right. (*Another pause.*) You're in a bad humor. It's the storm. Oh well, it'll go away . . . I don't really want to sing. The main thing is that I feel like singing.

RENNY. Well, don't remind other people about it when they don't.

JOHN. Don't you feel like it at all? . . . Aren't you happy? . . . Don't think about the rain; it's only water falling. Think about the countries where it doesn't rain.

RENNY. Yes . . . yes . . .

JOHN (*enthusiastically.*) Look at these albums with me!

RENNY. What albums?

JOHN. These albums of post-cards that the colonel sent me last year to amuse me. This year they're really useful to me . . . I'm looking for a country where Nelly and I can go on our honeymoon.

RENNY. I see.

JOHN. I can't decide between Morocco and Japan. Ja-

pan fascinates me. I want to show you one amazing card that's a picture of a garden on the sea, in the evening, with lanterns in the trees. I'm afraid that the colors aren't very accurate . . . (*He opens an album and looks for it.*) Then again, there's Australia . . . She will choose, naturally. But she's a child: she doesn't know what she wants — you can see that immediately. For the most part, I'll have to do the thinking for us both. (RENNY *laughs harshly, without cause.*) I don't remember very well what she was like before . . . I haven't told her so but, you know, between ourselves, I can't remember her well at all . . . It seems to me that she used to know pretty well what she wanted, or at least, that we never wanted the same things. (*He hunts a moment.*) I don't know . . . Come, help me pick out a country! Let's see where we're going on our ship.

RENNY (*brusquely.*) I haven't time. Do it yourself. You don't need me . . . No one needs me!

JOHN. What do you mean, Renny?

RENNY. I know what I'm saying. (*There is a long pause.*)

JOHN. Renny, if I were you, I'd work more.

RENNY. Oh, you would?

JOHN. You haven't done much for some time . . .

RENNY. Don't you think so?

JOHN. No. If I were you, I'd do more.

RENNY. A lot of good that does!

JOHN. Be patient! In the end you'll find what you need. Look at me: I don't need anything any more . . . Go ahead and work.

RENNY (*still controlling his anger.*) You're right. It's about the best thing I can do. Where's my portfolio?

JOHN. Your portfolio? Oh, on the table. Wait a minute, I put the albums on it . . . Look out! You'll tear them . . . Look out! Oh, Renny, don't be so rough . . . Watch it! You've all of Australia in your hands . . . (RENNY *loses all control and hurls the album across the room.*)

RENNY (*raging.*) Don't bother me with your playthings! Don't you know my instruments are important? What's this thing worth? To hell with it! (*He throws another album violently.* JOHN *looks at him fixedly, then, without say-*

ing a word, bends down and gathers together his album. RENNY, *as if with a cry*:) Can't you see that I'm unhappy?

JOHN. Renny, if it weren't raining, I'd advise you to take a walk.

RENNY. Well, I'm going to, anyway! (*He goes to the door and opens it violently, as if to throw himself out in the rain.*)

JOHN. Renny, why are you unhappy?

RENNY (*turning to look at his brother.*) John, may I ask you something?

JOHN. Sure. What is it?

RENNY. Johnny, do you want to do something for me? Do you want to give me a chance?

JOHN. Of course.

RENNY. . . . Give me a little elbow-room?

JOHN. Yes . . . But how?

RENNY. Will you give up —

JOHN. What?

RENNY. Will you give up —

NELLY'S VOICE (*calling.*) Johnny!

JOHN. Oh, here I am! (*To* RENNY.) What were you going to say?

RENNY. . . . Never mind.

JOHN. Here you are, little Nelly! You've been very slow in coming, young lady; I've been waiting for you. (*He slips his arm through the young girl's and takes her hand. To* RENNY.) Now, what were you saying?

RENNY. Nothing.

JOHN. Yes, you were too . . . You seemed to think it was very important.

RENNY. It couldn't have been much.

JOHN. You asked me to give up . . .

RENNY (*brusquely.*) What?

JOHN. I don't know.

RENNY. You see?

JOHN. Well, you were going to tell me.

RENNY. No, no. You didn't understand . . .

JOHN. You can talk in front of her, you know! . . . If it's a secret, she won't tell.

RENNY (*without replying.*) Well, so long.

JOHN. If you have something to tell me . . .

RENNY. If I had anything to say to you, I'd say it.

JOHN (*to* NELLY.) He's in an awful humor; it's the storm.

NELLY (*to* RENNY, *who is getting ready to go out.*) Are you going out in this terrible rain?

JOHN. Yes, it's pouring, you know.

NELLY. You'll get soaked.

RENNY. Oh . . . it doesn't matter.

NELLY (*politely.*) Stay here with us.

RENNY. No. I need some air. I'm at home in the rain. See you later. (*He goes out. The two young people stand silent a moment, then:*)

JOHN (*enthusiastically.*) Japan, or Morocco?

NELLY. What?

JOHN. Or Australia? . . . Nelly, dear one, where will we go? Morocco, Japan, or Australia?

NELLY. I don't know.

JOHN. Quickly! Quickly!

NELLY. Morocco, perhaps.

JOHN. Or Japan? The lantern-carriers . . . the green moon . . . I must show you . . . Japan?

NELLY. Japan!

JOHN. Oh! I knew you'd feel the same way I did!

NELLY. I want the same things you do, Johnny.

JOHN. Then, I'll try to want the right things, so you'll be pleased. (*He is sitting on the couch near the window with the album on his knees. The girl comes and sits beside him.*) There, that's the one.

NELLY. Yes . . . Oh! the tiny little houses . . . and all the lights . . (*With a hint of sadness.*) Yes, it's very lovely . .

JOHN (*holding her against him, and stroking her hair.*) Japan . . . the mikado . . . the little bridges . . . the mandarins . . . no, the mandarins are some place else . . . We'll be like kings in Japan, Nelly . . . but we won't be any better off than we are here.

NELLY (*very softly, very low.*) No.

JOHN. Darling, I'll rock you. If I rock you long enough, you'll fall asleep . . . She's quiet, she's asleep . . . Oh, you're a sweet little thing, Nelly; if we're so happy when

it rains, there's nothing for us to worry about. This is the worst day of the whole summer. Old Mary is splashing about, out there in the mud. It can last forever, I have everything I want. I don't even want to go fish for "souls", either in my regular little brook, or in the brooks of Japan . . . What are you thinking of, you with your cheek in your hand?

NELLY. I was listening to you.

JOHN. You look sort of sorry about it.

NELLY. Sorry? Oh no! At any rate, not for you.

JOHN. Are you a little sad? (*She shrugs her shoulders.*) Is it the marriage or the trip that upsets you?

NELLY. The uncertainty of both.

JOHN. The uncertainty? Why? . . . Everything's as certain as if we had written it on paper.

NELLY. Oh, I can't tell you.

JOHN. But you do know? (*She doesn't reply. He, suddenly struck with an idea*:) Is there something you've done that you're ashamed of?

NELLY. Ashamed of?

JOHN. Yes. You know what I mean.

NELLY. John!

JOHN. I've heard people say that that's enough sometimes to break up a marriage. Well, it won't break up ours . . . If there is something like that, don't worry about it . . . It doesn't upset me.

NELLY. There's nothing like that!

JOHN. Good, that's better! You know, if I don't tell you about my mistakes, it's only because I can't remember them.

NELLY. Johnny, could you remember a little?

JOHN. You mean, some of my mistakes?

NELLY. No, no, I forgive them; they don't matter. But I want so much to see you well! If you could only remember a little, we could leave soon and go away.

JOHN. Would you like to?

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. What if I never get well?

NELLY. Then I'll have to stay just as I was before I I came here. (*A tear.*)

JOHN. Were you depressed?

NELLY. I wasn't very happy.

JOHN. My God! What can I do? . . . It's this memory, this horrible memory!

NELLY. Would you try to remember? With me?

JOHN. Yes, I'll try.

NELLY (*showing him a little note-book.*) Look. Do you recognize this?

JOHN. No.

NELLY. It's an old notebook of yours.

JOHN. Oh, really?

NELLY. You dropped it one day in a park. I've never had the chance before to give it back to you.

JOHN (*joyously.*) Is there anything written in it?

NELLY. It's your engagement book.

JOHN. Of my old days? Oh, let me see! (*He leafs through and chooses a page at random.*) "10 o'clock, Marcel" . . . "Trocadero" . . . "Telephone S." . . . "A. S.?" "Noon, lunch with the countess . . . " What countess? "3 o'clock at the Odeon Galleries." What's the Odeon?

NELLY. It's a theatre.

JOHN. "4 o'clock, Marcel . . . Pantheon." "N . . . " "8 o'clock, dinner with Marcel." "Evening with Marcel." Who is Marcel?

NELLY. I don't know.

JOHN. Neither do I.

NELLY. He seems to have taken up one of your days, at least.

JOHN. Isn't it funny! . . . "N . . . " Who is N?

NELLY. Johnny, don't you see?

JOHN. No. (*He reflects with an effort.*) "N . . . " Nelly? Was it you?

NELLY. Yes . . .

JOHN. Oh! I'm glad to find you in it. (*Turning a page and reading:*) "Barber . . . Go to the office of the Figaro . . . 5 o'clock, N . . ." There you are again! (*He turns a page.*) "Tomorrow, N . . . " (*Another page.*) "N . . . " Did I see you every day?

NELLY (*glancing at the book, a little ill at ease.*) At that time? . . . No . . . We saw each other less often.

JOHN. I must have tried to get in touch with you and you were hiding. "N . . . " Again! I was patient. (*Still leafing through.*) "Pastry-shop." A pastry-shop! That's fun.

NELLY. Yes! Don't you remember it? We used to meet there often in the afternoon for tea with my sister or with Serge Lawrence.

JOHN (*suddenly very pale.*) With whom?

NELLY. Serge Lawrence, dear . . . One of our old friends . . . What's the matter? (JOHN *doesn't answer. He gets up quickly, his face contracted as if in pain.*) . . . Are you all right?

JOHN. Serge Lawrence . . .

NELLY (*uneasily.*) Well?

JOHN (*forcing a smile.*) A blow with a whip handle! . .

NELLY. What?

JOHN (*motioning her to be quiet.*) Wait! . . . Smooth hair? . . . A little clipped moustache? . . .

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. Ah! I see him! . . . Tall? Had a long neck?

NELLY (*very moved and delighted.*) Yes . . . Do you remember him? . . . You remember Serge Lawrence?

JOHN. Yes . . . He looked like a cavalry horse.

NELLY (*laughing.*) Serge, too? Like the husband you gave me?

JOHN (*stumbling over the words.*) Like the . . . well, but . . . that's the one I thought you had married. Heavens! Why?

NELLY. That's what I'd like to know. What a combination! That pitiful Serge Lawrence . . .

JOHN (*with a stifled cry.*) Ah!

NELLY. What is it?

JOHN. It hurt all of a sudden . . .

NELLY. Why?

JOHN. I don't know . . . I . . . (*He stops as if an idea were suddenly crystallizing.*)

NELLY. Well, what are you thinking about?

JOHN. He loved you, didn't he?

NELLY. You're joking!

JOHN (*bitterly.*) No.

NELLY. I never knew it.

JOHN. I knew it.

NELLY. How?

JOHN. I don't remember.

NELLY. Johnny?

JOHN. Ssh . . . Don't . . . Oh! I can feel the rumbling of the sea in my ears. The waves break over each other . . . Oh! (*He stumbles drunkenly and falls into a chair.*) . . . Oh! It hurt! . . . What's coming next?

NELLY. John, I'm going to call your mother.

JOHN. No! No! (*A flash of memory.*) Ah! He did love you! I know it. (*Very quickly, in a breath.*) I remember his eyes one day when we met you in the street. You stopped . . . and said hello . . . Oh, he loved you!

NELLY. What are you making up? What idea of yours is this?

JOHN (*wanting to believe her.*) Do you think I'm making it up? Are you sure?

NELLY. Sure!

JOHN. Just the same . . .

NELLY. What?

JOHN. It's very funny to remember and not to be sure that you're remembering.

NELLY. Johnny . . . Serge Lawrence was a very good friend of ours, and we've had lots of good times together. One evening, for instance, both of you had taken me out to supper in the Bois de Boulogne . . . You were getting along beautifully . . . drinking together and acting like two young fools . . .

JOHN. One evening?

NELLY. One summer evening, Johnny . . . We were eating outdoors. A little moth had come and gotten drowned in your glass.

JOHN. Oh! I can see it! . . . Yes, of course! . . . I do! I was drinking.

NELLY. He was too.

JOHN. Not as I was . . . not with the same spirit! He was enjoying himself and I was only pretending! . . . I can see all three of us.

NELLY. Really, John?

JOHN. Yes. Weren't you between us at the table?

NELLY. Yes!

JOHN. We'd just come from the theatre.

NELLY. Yes.

JOHN. We'd come up an interminable avenue . . . the avenue . . . what avenue is it? (*Suddenly.*) What an awful evening!

NELLY. It had begun so well . . .

JOHN. Not for me! Not for me! . . . For Serge Lawrence! . . . He held your hand while we came up the avenue . . I was walking behind you . . I was an annoying third . . I knew it! But I stayed . . . I was very gay. If I hadn't been, you'd have asked me to leave.

NELLY. He held my hand just as you have done . . .

JOHN (*hopefully.*) Yes? . . . Do you think so?

NELLY. Certainly.

JOHN (*suddenly.*) No! You didn't like me to touch your hand or your arm.

NELLY. Oh!

JOHN. You told me so . . . Yes, you did . . . one day! . . . Oh! What's happening to me?

NELLY. What is it?

JOHN. My head . . . it's reeling . . . figures are flashing through . . . (*His eyes closed.*) There are so many that I can't see them all! . . . (*There is a pause. He is now looking straight ahead of him: a smile of recognition.*) Ah yes, I see you . . . and I see myself. (*He looks at the notebook, apparently recognizing the people and the places, since he says:*) Yes . . . yes . . . I remember very well.

NELLY. John, it's your memory! . . .

JOHN (*sadly.*) Yes. It is . . .

NELLY. Why do you look so upset? (*He looks at her.*) Smile! You're practically well! Smile at me! (*There is a long pause.*)

JOHN. Please forgive me, Nelly.

NELLY. For what?

JOHN. For all the foolish things I must have said to you since you've been here.

NELLY. But John . . .

JOHN. It's a little bit your fault; you encouraged me.

NELLY. You haven't said anything foolish.

JOHN. About our marriage, Nelly . . Don't be annoyed.

NELLY. Annoyed? Why?

JOHN. You've never loved me . . . Don't say anything! I remember. As you said: This is memory.

NELLY. Oh, I'm so happy!

JOHN. I'm not.

NELLY. Smile at me. I've cured you. (*He looks at her without replying, starts toward the door, then his pent-up feelings break out.*)

JOHN. Oh! It's going to start again!

NELLY. What?

JOHN. As it was before . . . I'm still going to think of you from morning till night . . . ask you, ask myself interminable questions . . . and get no answer! . . .

NELLY. You know very well that I answered you.

JOHN (*angrily and sorrowfully.*) As you would a sick man, or a child that's going to die! . . . I'm surviving.

NELLY. You're going to make a fresh start, Johnny!

JOHN. Yes. And that's going to begin afresh. I'm going to follow you at a safe distance when you're out for a walk . . . I'll stand in the windows of cafés to watch you pass, so I can come up to you as if by accident — I've had enough of it — listening to other people talk about you . . . spending my life trying to let you know I love you without acting the utter fool — particularly since you've already dismissed me once! Everything I remember . . . and I *do* remember everything . . . I can't see it start again . . . Oh no! I've had enough!

NELLY. Listen to me, John . . .

JOHN. Why did you come? I'd forgotten you. You didn't mean anything to me any more . . . I scarcely even remembered what you looked like! . . . And now, it's all beginning again!

NELLY. John!

JOHN. Go away!

NELLY. Look at me!

JOHN. Yes, yes . . . Your eyes are the same. I can remember!

NELLY (*in tears.*) Look at me!

JOHN. Go away!

NELLY. I don't want to go away! . . .

JOHN. Oh! (*There is a pause.*) You're right! . . . I'd follow you! . . . I'd still follow along in tow! . . .

NELLY. No.

JOHN. Yes! Behind you — whistling a little tune — to give me some sort of self-possession.

NELLY. John, you remember well, but you understand badly . . . Listen . . . without looking at me . . . I can't bear it. (*She takes his hand and, without looking at him:*) I love you.

JOHN. What?

NELLY. Before, Johnny, I didn't understand. I was wrong.

JOHN (*getting up abruptly.*) Nelly, don't you see! I don't need you any more. I don't need your very kind attention! I'm not crazy now! . . . I'm as I was before! . . . I am "the same"! . . .

NELLY. I'm the one who is not the same. I didn't love you — now I do.

JOHN. Nelly!

NELLY. Yes, darling, people change . . .

JOHN (*nonplussed, pointing to himself.*) Nelly, this is me . . . me . . . Do you realize it? "Me", as I was before?

NELLY. Yes, Johnny.

JOHN. Well?

NELLY. I should have loved you sooner!

JOHN. Nelly! (*She holds out her arms. For a long time, they hold each other closely. Tears and laughter.*) My God! This is so marvelous! . . .

NELLY. Are you satisfied?

JOHN. Oh — little one, little one! . . . (*He looks at her, touches her, laughing and crying.*) . . . How is it you happened to come here?

NELLY. I'll tell you about it.

JOHN. Yes . . . Are you sure you love me? (*She makes a sign "yes".*) . . . Oh! I'm so happy! . . . (*Hesitating a second.*) Nelly, why didn't you love me then . . . and why do you love me now?

NELLY. I don't know, I'll think about it.

JOHN. Yes . . You think about it . . Will you marry me?

NELLY. If you still want me to.

JOHN. I've been waiting for you a long time . . .

NELLY. Everything comes to him who waits. (*Another kiss. Pointing to the garden:*) Here's your brother. (*She runs toward the stairs.*)

JOHN. Where are you going?

NELLY. I'll be back.

JOHN. Sweet little Nelly!

NELLY. Ssb . . .

JOHN. Nelly! . . . Japan! . . .

NELLY. Lanterns! . . . (*From the top of the stairs, she blows him a kiss and disappears.* RENNY *comes in.*)

JOHN. Renny! . . . Renny, old fellow! . . . I'm cured!

RENNY. You've never been so sick.

JOHN. Oh yes, Renny! You don't know. I remember . . . I know what's happened . . . There was a screen of smoke — but it's gone!

RENNY (*incredulous.*) Don't be too excited about it.

JOHN. Don't you believe me? You don't dare believe me yet! You'll see.

RENNY. You have a fever.

JOHN. A little, yes. That's because I'm as happy — *happier* than when I was sick!

RENNY. What?

JOHN (*trembling with emotion and joy, hands and voice shaking.*) You'll understand. Listen . . The little one, Nelly . .

RENNY. Yes.

JOHN. I'm engaged to her; we're going to get married.

RENNY. Really? Well, à propos of that . . .

JOHN. Don't interrupt! Renny, I loved her before . . .

RENNY. I know.

JOHN. Oh — you know? Good . . . I loved her and she didn't love me, but now she does! Do you understand? Before I was sick, I loved her. You see, I *do* remember . . . if you knew how well! When I got sick, I thought I'd lost her and now I'm well and I find her again! She's mine! Oh Renny, I'm happy! . . . Naturally, I'm a little hazy about some things . . . but tomorrow it'll all be clear . . . Today's

enough! Today's more than enough! Renny, Renny — she loves me!

RENNY (*his throat dry.*) Did she tell you?

JOHN. Yes.

RENNY. Ah . . .

JOHN. Oh, Renny, old boy! (*He holds out his arms.*)

RENNY. She told you that she loved you?

JOHN. Yes.

RENNY. Well . . .

JOHN. What?

RENNY. This game's going a little far! . . .

JOHN. What?

RENNY (*does not reply.*)

JOHN. What do you mean?

RENNY. Nothing.

JOHN. You do. You were talking about a game. What game?

RENNY. Don't bother about it, Johnny. You'll make yourself sick.

JOHN. That's no answer.

RENNY. It's the only one.

JOHN (*icily.*) You have your own peculiar way of being glad to see me better . . .

RENNY. Don't be a fool!

JOHN. Renny!

RENNY (*very nervously.*) For heaven's sake, quiet down! We'll talk about it when you're a little more calm.

JOHN. I'm calm enough. You're the one who isn't.

RENNY. Well — very possibly! I see you exciting yourself, jumping around like a child after a balloon. It's not good for you.

JOHN. What balloon? . . . Why is it a game? . . . I'm talking about how happy I am. I tell you that I'm going to marry . . .

RENNY. Marry! You're not going to get married tomorrow, are you?

JOHN. As soon as possible.

RENNY (*forcing himself to be calm.*) We'll talk about it when you're well.

JOHN. I am now!

RENNY. When anyone is as sick as you are, he's not cured in a minute.

JOHN. You just finished telling me that I've never been so sick.

RENNY. You have to exaggerate to make any impression when a man is as irrational as you.

JOHN. Irrational! . . . That's a fine thing to say the minute I recover my reason.

RENNY. Well, you'll be better still if you get proper care.

JOHN. I have recovered it. I knew it! . . She told me so!

RENNY. Just to please you.

JOHN. But I tell you I remember *now!* I can recall things! . . . Incidents from the past are as clear as those of today . . consecutive incidents . . . that hinge on each other . . . that complete each other. Renny, it must be so since I can see these things, since I can remember.

RENNY. Badly!

JOHN. Oh, I suffered too much in order to remember not to be sure that I remembered well. (*There is a short pause.* JOHN *looks at his brother fixedly.*) Listen, Renny . . .

RENNY. Let's not talk about it any more. Just be calm. Avoid thinking . . .

JOHN (*still watching him.*) What about?

RENNY. About your illness.

JOHN (*apparently very calm.*) You mean, about my cure? You see, it's rather important to me since the date of my marriage depends on it.

RENNY. Your marriage!

JOHN. It would be better if I "avoided thinking" about that too? . . . wouldn't it? . . . wouldn't it? . . . Oh, yes . . . better not?

RENNY. Of course.

JOHN (*darkly threatening.*) Why do you want to keep me from thinking about what pleases me?

RENNY. Shut up! You annoy me!

JOHN. No. Tell me why?

RENNY. Because it hurts me to see you go in for believing certain things whole-heartedly which can only wound you in the end . . . It's ridiculous! You were get-

ting better and now this comes along to spoil everything . . . a young companion was provided for you just as you'd be given paper dolls to cut out if you were fifteen years younger. That's not worth getting excited about, is it?

JOHN. Go on . . . I'm listening.

RENNY. That's all.

JOHN (*who has watched him with the closest attention.*) Renny, you don't want to believe that I'm cured.

RENNY. Really!

JOHN. . . . Renny, you'd rather see me dead than cured.

RENNY. What are you . . .

JOHN. . . . Or sent off to an insane asylum instead of to the home I dream of.

RENNY. Will you shut up!

JOHN. Renny — I love that girl and so do you!

RENNY. That's not true!

JOHN. Oh, not true, isn't it?

RENNY (*turning pale.*) What are you saying?

JOHN. Only what you've said! For the last ten minutes, your voice, your eyes have denied what you were saying!

RENNY. Please . . .

JOHN. Don't you love her?

RENNY. I won't answer you. You're talking like a fool.

JOHN. Don't you love her? Answer me. I'm watching you. Don't you love her?

RENNY. No.

JOHN (*a cry.*) Oh!

RENNY (*another cry.*) Yes! . . . Yes, I love her . . . There! Are you satisfied?

JOHN. Coward!

RENNY. What's that?

JOHN. Coward! I say you're a coward!

RENNY. Will you shut up . . . you fool!

JOHN (*very calm, scornful.*) What a brother! What a brother I have!

RENNY. You're mad!

JOHN. Oh no! (*There is a pause.*) My brother has but one ambition. He wants to steal the girl from me and marry her himself. Naturally, he prefers that I shouldn't be any better when it happens! . . . Oh, what a brother I

have! What a brother! Sick as I was, I was in his way. I have no luck — It didn't occur to me to stand aside, and so he lost patience! What a breach of etiquette on my part! What lack of subtlety! Will you ever forgive me? Perhaps you will because you are so kind. I rely almost entirely on your kindness. (*Painful laugh which soon ceases.*)

RENNY. You don't know what you're talking about! You're making all this up! You certainly have a rich imagination.

JOHN. So rich that I'm going to finish that sentence you began a while ago.

RENNY. Which one?

JOHN. "Will you give up" . . . the girl! You didn't say "the girl", but that's it, isn't it?

RENNY. Yes . . . Yes, Johnny, that's it . . .

JOHN. Coward!

RENNY. Shut up! (*He seizes* JOHN *by the shoulders and forcibly, brutally, throws him down in a chair.*) Now listen to me a minute, will you? And try to understand.

JOHN. Yes.

RENNY. I admit that I hate to see you taken in so quickly by a stupid game which was given you just like medicine.

JOHN. Game . . . ?

RENNY. If you don't realize it, she does. It is the way they hope to cure you, and now apparently you're better. I don't believe it.

JOHN. I *am* cured.

RENNY. No . . . I was in on all that, and I love the girl.

JOHN. Ah!

RENNY. Be quiet . . . I know she doesn't give me a thought . . . she doesn't even see me! She is too wrapped up in this game — a new game for her . . . Don't play any more! (*Gently and firmly insistent.*) John, I'm thirty-five. I know what I don't have . . . I know what I need. Johnny, give me a chance! . . . I'm your older brother. I need what I'm asking for. I've worn myself out for all of you; now it's my turn. Don't play any more! . . . You're much more attractive . . . you're a fascinating companion . . . and as long as you'll play, she'll never look at anybody else. But

if she sees that the game's over, she'll realize how little it really meant, and then I'll be able to have my say . . . There, do you understand, John . . . ? They've given you pennies so that you could play at making circles in the water. Here I am nearby, watching you. I have nothing with which to buy the bread I need . . . and I'm asking you for your pennies . . . They'll give you more.

JOHN (*shrugging his shoulders.*) No, Renny. If you were in my place, I'd have to take yours. To what end?

RENNY. You reason well. But you talk like an irresponsible child! I see my life behind me — empty!

JOHN. I see mine — empty too, but for hope!

RENNY. . . . Everything I have always needed.

JOHN. . . . The only thing I have ever wanted. I have it now, and I'm keeping it.

RENNY. Oh, you're keeping it?

JOHN. Yes.

RENNY. Poor boy!

JOHN. Why . . . why "poor boy"? I'm not to be pitied . . . We're going to get married. (RENNY *shakes his head, ironically pitying.*) Yes, the whole thing's settled. Nelly wants it as much as I do.

RENNY (*same gesture.*) Ah, really?

JOHN. What sort of impossible thing are you hoping for? . . . No, I tell you, we're going to be married. She accepted; she's seen now that I'm well.

RENNY (*same.*) Yes . . . yes . . .

JOHN. Yes! . . . Quite well. We're going to get married because I love her and she loves me. There! It's as simple as that.

RENNY. Poor fellow!

JOHN. What?

RENNY. She didn't love you before, did she?

JOHN. No.

RENNY. But she loves you now?

JOHN. Yes.

RENNY. Well . . .

JOHN (*hesitantly.*) But, you see . . .

RENNY. You were a brilliant, promising young man . . . and she didn't love you . . . and today . . . ? It's very strange, isn't it?

JOHN. Renny, I've told you it's so.

RENNY. What's happened? All she needed was to see you sick and worn out, with your mind almost gone, and she lost her head . . . ? Strange!

JOHN (*nonplussed, looks at him without answering.*)

RENNY. Well, no doubt everything comes in time. If I were you, I'd be a little surprised. (*There is a pause.*)

JOHN. Listen, Renny, I've wondered about that and I don't know what to think . . . There have been several things . . . I'm not completely clear in my head yet . . . I'm trying to get myself straightened out a little . . . Now, you were saying . . . ? Let's see . . . (*He reflects with effort.*) You said that before . . .

RENNY. Don't tire yourself. Don't think about it.

JOHN. Yes! Yes, I must! . . . I'm delighted that she's changed but I want to know why.

RENNY (*evasively.*) Everything changes.

JOHN. No! For four years I loved her, and I still do. I haven't changed, and I was crazy for awhile.

RENNY (*with false ease.*) Don't bother about what has been . . . Pretend that you knew one girl before and that you know another now . . . who looks like her and has the same name. That simplifies everything. (*There is a pause.*)

JOHN (*a cry.*) But Renny, if "she" were someone else, I wouldn't love her!

RENNY (*looking at him.*) Ah!

JOHN. If she were someone else, I'd give her up immediately. But she's Nelly . . . She's the "same" . . . Is she pretty? I don't know . . . I know she was. It's because I've suffered so much and waited so long that I won't give her up . . . because I'm being paid for all the misery, the agony — do you understand? That's all . . . If it weren't for that, she wouldn't mean anything to me. What are you thinking about? (RENNY *starts to speak, then stops.*) What?

RENNY. Nothing.

JOHN. Yes. You were going to say something . . .

RENNY. Nothing at all.

JOHN. . . . And you don't dare say it! . . . What is it?

RENNY. Nothing! . . . Nothing! . . . So long. I'll leave you to your games. Enjoy them. Have a good time as long as you can.

JOHN (*beginning to be terrified.*) Why? Why do you say . . . ?

RENNY. Keep up your faith! . . That's what saves you!

JOHN (*trembling.*) Oh, don't confuse me deliberately! . . . Help me to get my bearings! . . . (*Suddenly.*) Don't look at me like that! Oh, you are a coward! . . . You want to make me believe I'm not cured. Go away! I'm not crazy! . . . Go away! I can't bear the sight of you! You're a coward!

RENNY (*menacing.*) John!

JOHN. You try to hurt me! You push my head back in the water just as I'm getting out! (*Losing all control.*) Coward! . . . I have told you so, but not often enough! . . . Coward! . . . Instead of helping me! . . . Oh, you coward!

RENNY (*very pale, deliberately.*) You want my help? Well, I'll give it to you . . . We'll see if just once you can get something through your head.

JOHN (*suddenly trembling.*) Yes.

RENNY. Do you remember very well what your little friend Nelly was like before?

JOHN. Yes . . .

RENNY. Have you looked at her closely today?

JOHN. Yes . . . (RENNY *looks at him, his hands trembling.*) Well?

RENNY. Well, Johnny, she isn't the same . . . You see, you still don't have everything.

JOHN (*crushed.*) What?

RENNY (*makes no reply.*)

JOHN. She isn't the same? (RENNY *shakes his head.*) Who is she, then?

RENNY. A girl who looks like her . . . Mother had her come down to give you a change . . . She's a young girl the bishop knew . . . (JOHN *is no longer listening. A long pause.*)

JOHN. I was wondering, too: "Why does she love me?" It surprised me a little.

RENNY (*to himself. He is profoundly moved, hands still trembling.*) He hasn't even asked for any explanations . . . Poor kid! He isn't well yet . . . He's very sick . . . Still, you can't sacrifice everything for invalids.

JOHN. She had changed a little. But I didn't mind; after a while it would have been very pleasant. (*There is a pause.* RENNY, *ill at ease, does not look at him.*) Don't look away, Renny. Are you angry? I called you a coward . . . but I didn't know . . . You were right to tell me . . . (*The two brothers stand facing each other. Evening is falling.* NELLY *appears at the head of the stairs.*)

NELLY. There you are! I didn't hear you any more so I thought you'd gone out.

RENNY (*stupidly.*) No. We're here.

NELLY. The rain has stopped.

RENNY. Oh! Isn't it raining any more?

NELLY. No. The paths in the garden are almost washed away and the trees are beaten, but the rain has stopped. Isn't this a good time to fish, Johnny?

JOHN (*sadly, automatically.*) Yes.

NELLY. What's the matter?

JOHN. Yes . . . a good time to fish.

NELLY. You're sad again!

JOHN. No.

NELLY. You are. Why?

JOHN. No.

RENNY (*with an effort.*) It's this endless rain. The changing seasons.

NELLY (*very gently, to* JOHN.) Would you like me to play for you?

JOHN. Yes.

NELLY. Your favorite tune, the one that you play so badly. (*She goes to the piano and plays.*)

JOHN. Renny, you're right . . . absolutely. She isn't the same.

RENNY (*remains silent.*)

JOHN. Oh no! I see a hundred things now. Isn't it funny, the way I was taken in . . . ? She doesn't even have the same color of hair! . . . and the other was a little bigger . . . and everything . . . everything . . . All you have to do is look at her!

RENNY. Yes . . .

JOHN. There are some things similar, of course . . . the slender figure . . . I wondered what she was like! This time

I'd gotten so close a resemblance that I confused the two women in one!

RENNY. Listen . . .

JOHN. Thank you, Renny . . . I had to be put on the right track. You see, as soon as I'm told I understand. You'll see, I'll get well quickly now. (*He dreams sorrowfully.* RENNY, *little by little, leaves his brother and goes over to the young girl at the piano who continues to play.* JOHN *sits, head drooping. Tears slowly roll down his cheeks. Mechanically, he draws a scrap of paper from his pocket, his poem of the preceding evening. He reads.*)

"I see a white house . . . "

(*Crumpling the paper.*) That doesn't mean anything.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

The next day — 10 *o'clock in the morning. The* MOTHER *is standing by the piano, putting music in order.* MARY *enters, carrying two fish on a plate.*

MARY. Madam.

MOTHER. What?

MARY. Shall I fry Master John's fish?

MOTHER. Yes, it'll please him — for once he caught some!

MARY. Look how he caught 'em.

MOTHER (*glancing at the dish.*) Oh, what's the matter with them?

MARY. They're all cut up like as if a cat had been at 'em.

MOTHER. Well, I don't think you need bother . . . (JOHN *enters, a very old pistol in his hand.*) Where did you catch these fish?

JOHN. In the brook, Mummy.

MOTHER. They look a little odd.

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER. What's happened to them?

JOHN. I caught them with a pistol.

MOTHER. With a pistol?

JOHN. Why not? I never caught any on a line. Here are two. It's fun: you aim, they jump up in the air and then float with the current.

MARY. Well, must I fry them?

JOHN. No, they have no shape.

MARY. What's the use of fishin' if you're going to cut up the fish like these here? . . . (*She goes out.*)

MOTHER. Where did you find a pistol?

JOHN. It's the one that belongs in the armory.

MOTHER. I thought it wasn't any good.

JOHN. Oh, yes.

MOTHER. Well, I hope you aren't going to hurt yourself.

JOHN. Oh no, Mummy.

MOTHER. You always have such strange ideas.

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER (*looking at him with tender admiration.*) My Johnny! . . . You don't look very happy, dear.

JOHN. I am.

MOTHER. A little bored?

JOHN. A little.

MOTHER. You're not going to start being bored just when you've recovered your memory and your mummy is so happy? . . . I was so startled to hear you mention your father. (*He doesn't answer.*) Do you remember when I used to play the piano for you after you'd finished your lessons?

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER. My fingers were lighter then! . . . Oh, you don't gain anything in growing older.

JOHN. You don't gain much in growing younger, Mother.

MOTHER. Do you remember Mrs. Provost?

JOHN. She was that nice old woman.

MOTHER. Her daughter is married, you know.

JOHN. I know; we went to the wedding.

MOTHER (*laughing and crying.*) Yes, we went together! . . . It was the first time you wore long trousers.

JOHN. She was married the year I fell on my knee.

MOTHER. Yes! . . . Oh, you remember better than I!

JOHN. And a little while after that, little Lionel left for that sanitarium in the south.

MOTHER. Can you remember your poor little brother?

JOHN. Very well, Mummy . . . it's all very clear. (*The* MOTHER *looks at him, greatly moved, making no effort to check her tears.*)

MOTHER. Johnny! Johnny! . . . It's a miracle.

JOHN. It happened yesterday.

MOTHER. But you didn't tell me about it! . . . And now you don't look happy.

JOHN. When my memory is completely recovered and everything is straight in my head, I'll be glad for your sake, Mother. But as far as I'm concerned, I don't think it's so wonderful.

MOTHER. Now, it's foolish to talk like that! . . . . Though it really doesn't matter . . . But, above all, don't get too tired and force yourself to remember anything . . . Everything will come back slowly! . . . I'm so happy about it.

JOHN. That's fine, Mummy.

MOTHER. Your little friend is out in the garden. She loves you a great deal, you know.

JOHN. . . . Very kind.

MOTHER (*looking at him, tenderly amused.*) My poor boy! . . .

JOHN. Why?

MOTHER. Who suffered so much because of one little girl and who kept his trouble all to himself! Do you remember that?

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER. Little fool! . . .You thought she was never to be had . . . and — you see what they're like — she came right away, at the first sign! . . . Little fool! (JOHN *looks at her smiling.*) Why are you smiling like that?

JOHN (*ironically, a little bitterly.*) You know that I'm better, *maman.*

MOTHER. So?

JOHN. Well, now you needn't bother . . . You have all been very kind . . . "Sacred lie" is the word, isn't it?

MOTHER. I don't understand what you're talking about.

JOHN. Oh, yes, you do, Mother.

MOTHER. What?

JOHN (*dropping his head.*) Nothing. You've taken very good care of me.

MOTHER. You bother me, dear. You aren't all well yet, are you?

JOHN. So much the better if I'm not! . . . You see, already I'm less happy than I was yesterday.

MOTHER. Oh! How you upset me! . . . I must leave you. I don't know, you children are too complex for me. My God! Is it impossible to be happy for just one day?

MARY (*entering.*) His Reverence has just come, Madam. He's waiting for you in the arbor.

MOTHER. Has he come to say good-bye?

MARY. His Reverence is going back to his diocese, Madam.

MOTHER. He's going away, too.

MARY. Too? But he's the only one that's leaving. Why do you say that, Madam?

MOTHER. Why . . . ? Yes. He's the only one who's going away. Oh, I don't know what I'm saying any more, Mary . . . I don't know. (*She goes out.* JOHN *remains seated. A pause.* NELLY *appears, coming from the garden.*)

NELLY. Hello, Johnny.

JOHN. Good morning, Miss Coislin.

NELLY. Miss?

JOHN. Miss.

NELLY. What's the matter?

JOHN. Nothing.

NELLY. Oh, but there is.

JOHN. Let's speak of me as little as possible . . . Did you sleep well? You are up early this morning.

NELLY. John, since last night, you've avoided me. You didn't even look at me during dinner, and afterwards, you went upstairs and shut yourself in your room. This morning you went out to the meadow without waiting for me! . . . You've hurt me.

JOHN. I'm going to surprise you. I've been hurt a little, too.

NELLY. Why . . . ? It seems to me that after yesterday . . .

JOHN. Yes . . . after yesterday . . . It's the awakening

that's hard. Oh! I'll manage it.

NELLY. I don't understand you.

JOHN (*very concisely.*) Yes, you do. You thought you were doing right. So did mother. But, you see, the cure used was a double-edged knife: I've cut myself a little.

NELLY. Don't you love me any more?

JOHN. Miss . . .

NELLY. You've called me Nelly for years!

JOHN (*a little feverishly.*) Oh! please! . . . A great misfortune has just happened to me: I've recovered my lost reason. So, let's not play any more, since I know the game. (*Ending with a laugh, which is cut off.*) Why should I call you Nelly . . . since you're not Nelly?

NELLY (*makes no answer.*)

JOHN. No, you're not.

NELLY (*who doesn't understand.*) Do you think I've changed so?

JOHN. It isn't a question of that. You aren't . . . That's all. One person can't be another.

NELLY. What?

JOHN. No. Let's stop, do you mind . . . ? I thank you, I thank you very sincerely for being willing to double for "another" to cure an invalid. He's cured . . . That's all that was wanted . . . Let's finish it!

What is your real first name?

NELLY. John, now you *are* crazy!

JOHN. That's pretty funny! (*He laughs softly, takes two steps, and stops.*) Don't you want to tell me your name?

NELLY (*beseechingly.*) Look at me.

JOHN. Oh, you look like her! Mother chose well . . . and I fell for it right away . . . Now, naturally, I see the differences.

NELLY. Are there differences?

JOHN. Between you and her? Several. I noticed them for the first time today . . . saw them very clearly . . . very . . . Oh! You don't suffer by comparison.

NELLY (*begging.*) Johnny, Johnny . . .

JOHN (*with sad but smiling certainty.*) There! She would never have talked to me so naturally . . . or so tenderly.

NELLY. I didn't know you!

JOHN. *She* would have seen to it that she never knew me. She wasn't anxious to.

NELLY. I was wrong about you! . . . I was wrong about myself! . . .

JOHN. *She* would never have admitted a mistake! She was a proud young thing — stupidly so, sometimes, but consistently so.

NELLY. If I hurt you, I beg you to forgive me . . .

JOHN. *She* was never so humble! . . . She never asked anyone's pardon.

NELLY. Oh, I admit I was proud.

JOHN. Yes, she was!

NELLY (*leaning toward him.*) John, look at me, please. Give me a chance . . . Won't you believe me?

JOHN (*changing his tone like a fencing master who, sure of himself, sets the pace.*) Why did you come here?

NELLY. To take care of you.

JOHN. *She* wouldn't have exerted that much effort.

NELLY. Yes!

JOHN. No! . . . Have you read my books?

NELLY. They're beautiful. You wrote them thinking of me!

JOHN. She absolutely refused to read them! — and if she had read them, she would never have admitted that she understood them!

NELLY. You judge me unfairly. (*Sadly.*)

JOHN. Do you think so?

NELLY. Yes . . . it's ghastly.

JOHN. She pretended not to give a hang about what the world thought . . she paid no attention to what I thought!

NELLY (*suppressing her tears badly.*) Love me, Johnny!

JOHN. What! *She* take the first step? Ah! you play her badly!

NELLY. I didn't love you . . . Now I do.

JOHN. She never cared for anyone so easily! . . . She was cold, although she never quite knew why.

NELLY. I don't know what to say to you . . . I feel completely helpless and clumsy.

JOHN (*triumphantly.*) And that's another thing! She was so very, very adroit! She managed me as if I were at the point of a foil! Not forgetting the red heart in the

middle of my plastron! Since I was always afraid of hurting her and since she had a supple wrist, she always thrust home . . . She never missed . . . (*The young girl says nothing more. She is sitting down, crying softly. His aggressiveness has abated. He makes a friendly gesture toward her.*) Ah! no, you aren't like her. I've never seen her look at me with such soft, wet eyes . . . And it wouldn't have made her unattractive, either.

NELLY. But I've told you already that I'm sorry.

JOHN. Remorseful . . . ? Come, Miss Coislin, don't be unkind! . . . My head isn't very clear yet, so don't make me try too hard. Why do you want to make me believe you are, since you aren't?

NELLY (*getting up again.*) I am!

JOHN. No! You aren't! . . . Oh, it's a stupid, a malicious game! (*Violently.*) You aren't! You aren't! Don't say anything! You aren't! . . . Confess that you aren't! . . . (*He stands before her, hands clenched, threatening.*)

NELLY. No, I'm not . . . (*Eyes filled with tears.*)

JOHN (*calmer.*) Ah! What is your name?

NELLY. What's that matter?

JOHN. No, I suppose it really doesn't.

NELLY. You loved her so much?

JOHN. Yes, I loved her a great deal.

NELLY. Do you still love her?

JOHN. Yes, always. Do you know her, by any chance? (NELLY *shakes her head negatively.*) I would have asked you to remember me to her. You could have seen how she'd take it.

NELLY. Aren't you going to try to see her again?

JOHN. Oh, no!

NELLY. She would be glad to see you.

JOHN. Politely, politely! . . . She's horribly polite.

NELLY. Don't you think that she's capable of loving anyone?

JOHN. Yes, the first one who comes along.

NELLY. Oh! You force her to be wrong!

JOHN. Yes! . . . But I'm forced to suffer for each one of her mistakes . . . I'm going . . .

NELLY (*holding him back.*) John! I love you.

JOHN. You're not she.

NELLY. Oh, all right, all right . . . I'm "another" who loves you. You can love some one else.

JOHN. Never.

NELLY. Love me! . . . If you knew how I need it.

JOHN. I should like to be able to help you, Miss Coislin, but one doesn't love through pity . . . You have been very kind. I thank you again for having done so much for me. If I'm repaying you inadequately, it's only that I can't do any more.

. . . . Good morning.

NELLY. John!

JOHN. I'm going to take a walk . . . (*He starts to leave.*)

NELLY. Johnny! Japan! . . .

JOHN. Ah, yes . . . Japan! . . . Zipangu . . . Marco Polo . . . Heavens! learning's coming back, too? . . . What a memory!

NELLY. Johnny! Japan . . .

JOHN. Yes! That's a place I'll never go. (RENNY *comes in.*)

RENNY. Where are you going?

JOHN (*looking at him affectionately.*) Oh, there you are . . . I'm going down to the stream . . . to catch one or two.

RENNY. Can I give you a book to take along?

JOHN. Oh no, thanks.

RENNY. Would you like . . .

JOHN. No, I'd rather fish. It's the only thing I enjoy, you know.

NELLY. Do you want me to come with you, John?

JOHN. I'd rather be alone with my fish.

NELLY. You could teach me . . .

JOHN. . . . One catches so few.

NELLY. You seem upset, Johnny.

JOHN. Oh, no . . . I would be . . . (*He takes a step, stops and points in front of him.*) Well! There I am!

NELLY. What?

JOHN (*calmly.*) I say, there I am.

RENNY. Where?

JOHN. There. In the mirror.

RENNY (*uneasy.*) What mirror?

JOHN. There . . . Oh! how stupid I look! . . . And unhappy! I didn't know I was so unhappy. (*To the imaginary reflection.*) Smile, you! Will you smile? . . . No; the harder I try, the more stupid I look! . . . Oh! it's too much! . . . It shouldn't be allowed to go so far! . . . Go away! Will you go away! . . . Will you! . . . Will you! . . . (*He fires before him.*) I made a little hole in the glass but I look just as foolish as before . . . Somebody should invent a mirror that would return the ball . . .

NELLY (*listening to him sadly, and pale with fear.*) What are you saying, John?

RENNY (*uneasily.*) Go rest a little while in your room.

JOHN (*raving.*) Oh, no! There's a mirror in my room, too — two of them counting the one over the fireplace . . . No! no! (*Beating the air with his arms.*) I want to go out and get some air . . . I want to go out and get some air! . . .

NELLY. I'm coming with you.

JOHN. Let me alone! Not today!

NELLY. Yes! Now!

RENNY. Let him alone if he likes. (NELLY *looks at him, startled.*)

JOHN. Yes, I do. Thank you, Renny. (*He goes toward the door, then, about to go out:*) I thank you for yesterday. too, you know . . . You were right to tell me. (*He goes out.*)

NELLY (*terrified.*) You oughtn't to leave him alone! Can't you see how wretched he is?

RENNY. Why don't you go with him?

NELLY (*sadly.*) He doesn't want me any more.

RENNY. He doesn't know what he wants, poor boy.

NELLY. I'm going to leave tomorrow.

RENNY. Leave?

NELLY. I'm no good to him now.

RENNY (*almost in spite of himself.*) Oh, but don't go yet!

NELLY. I can't do anything more for him. Why hang on here?

RENNY (*behind her.*) Wouldn't you do anything for me?

NELLY (*nervously.*) What could I do for you, for God's sake?

RENNY. It's impossible that you don't understand . . . Confess that you don't want to! . . . I love you . . . you know it perfectly well . . . with a heart that knows what it's giving

and knows how hard it is to love . . . You've been able to see all along how I've felt about you. (*She moves impatiently.*) I want to give you a love so strong, so gentle, that at last you'll feel safe . . . You've never felt safe, have you? Oh, I've spoken too soon, I've been too abrupt, but the days are too few; you only came for a visit and you'll go away! When a man sees his happiness, he can't be blamed for not letting his chance go; there it is, but it passes like a sole in the water: you lose your head! . . . Can't you understand? It's the same story as my brother's, who shoots his fish! . . . You don't have the time to love as you'd like. I've been a little brutal . . . and I do love you so.

NELLY. Why do you tell me that?

RENNY. Have you decided to ignore it? (*Gesture from* NELLY.) Maybe you're making a mistake.

NELLY. To be right doesn't make you happy.

RENNY. Happiness! My God! . . . I begin to live, I begin to feel again and what can I do! . . . Oh, if you knew how I love you!

NELLY (*vaguely.*) Yes.

RENNY. I know: the only one interested is the person who's in love. (*He makes no effort to hold back his tears.*) I'm going to be very unhappy.

NELLY. Do you think so?

RENNY. I'm not very young now but I'll soon be much older.

NELLY. Do you hate me for this?

RENNY. No, Miss Coislin . . . I look at you . . . and you're very pretty . . . only you have no pity.

NELLY. One doesn't love through pity.

RENNY. That's very true. (*He looks at her, almost harshly, then suddenly:*) Why did you come here?

NELLY. To see your brother, you know that.

RENNY. Oh, yes, the invalids . . . and the others . . . who don't complain . . . whose illness eats them away and follows them through life! . . . Women always go to invalids.

NELLY. I came to "your brother".

RENNY. And I'm sure that you would have done a great deal for him.

NELLY (*firmly.*) Yes.

RENNY. I watched you playing together: you seemed

to believe in it almost as much as he did.

NELLY (*says nothing.*)

RENNY. You see how I feel and yet you're going away; you would have stayed if he had asked you! . . .

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY. You won't give me even a word of hope but you would do anything he asked! . . .

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY (*with violent sorrow.*) I suppose that, to please him, you would have promised to marry him and really have meant it . . . marry an invalid! . . .

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY. You would have married him, wouldn't you? . . . Admit it! You would have married my brother! . . .

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY. Oh! the power of the hospital! . . . And you say that people don't love through pity?

NELLY. It wasn't through pity.

RENNY. . . . What?

NELLY. I didn't pity him.

RENNY. You loved him?

NELLY. Yes.

RENNY (*blanching.*) It isn't true?

NELLY (*beginning to cry.*) Yes . . . I loved him.

RENNY. My God! What have I done?

NELLY. What? What do you mean?

RENNY. Nothing . . . nothing . . . I didn't understand. (*In spite of himself.*) What have I done?

NELLY. What have you done?

RENNY. I'll fix it up . . . I'll try to fix it up.

NELLY (*frightened.*) Fix what?

RENNY. Don't leave . . . Stay a few days . . . won't you . . . ? I must find John.

NELLY. What are you afraid of?

RENNY (*his voice strangled, forcing himself to be calm.*) Afraid? Of what? Why? There's nothing to be afraid of! . . . He's fishing down there. I'm going to keep him company for a while, that's all . . . Miss Coislin, I beg your pardon for detaining you here so long. (*Before he goes out, the* MOTHER *and the* BISHOP *come in.*)

MOTHER. Are you going out, Renny?

RENNY (*without pausing.*) I'll be back. (*He leaves precipitately.*)

MOTHER. What's happening, Miss Coislin? You're crying. Is John sick?

NELLY. He doesn't know me any more. (*She goes out quickly.*)

MOTHER. Where are they going? . . . What's the matter with them? Now he doesn't recognize her! . . . My God, can't I have any hope for two consecutive days? I'll never see those children happy!

BISHOP. They're young.

MOTHER. They don't seem to think so . . . I can't cope with them any more. I want to talk to them but the words won't come — or they aren't the right ones. I take an interest in their affairs and they look at me as if I were a stranger. I want to do things for them . . . but I'm clumsy, or something. I don't have any luck.

BISHOP (*smiling.*) Come, come, Madame!

MOTHER. It seems to me that the older I get, the shorter my rôle becomes. I can see the time coming when I'm going to get in everybody's way. (*She dries her eyes.* RENNY *appears.*) Where are you going, Renny?

RENNY (*upset.*) Have you seen John?

MOTHER. No. Do you want him?

RENNY. No, no! . . . Maybe he's in his room.

MOTHER. I would have seen him go upstairs.

RENNY. Perhaps he's in the hothouse. I'll go see.

MOTHER. But, Renny . . .

RENNY. Oh, don't worry . . . don't worry.

MOTHER (*suddenly afraid.*) What? What is it? (*Calling*) Johnny! . . . Johnny!

BISHOP. Listen, Madame . . .

MOTHER. Oh! These children make me afraid! . . . I never know what's happening. I love both of them so, and I'm always afraid. (*Suddenly she starts to cry.*)

BISHOP. Madame . . .

MOTHER. Yes.

BISHOP. You cry like a child.

MOTHER. Yes, I've grown old, and I'm like a child; I can't bear to be left alone.

BISHOP. Who has left you alone?

MOTHER. Oh, yes, I've had people around me! . . . I don't know . . . No one has ever advised me.

BISHOP. I am an old friend, Madame.

MOTHER. And I was wrong about you, too.

BISHOP. Wrong?

MOTHER. I'd have done better to have listened to you before.

BISHOP (*remains silent.*)

MOTHER. Oh! If it were to do over!

BISHOP. And they say everything comes in time . . . .

MOTHER. Ah! Your Reverence.

BISHOP. And you call me "Your Reverence"! (*There is a pause.*)

MOTHER. What are you thinking about? Am I making you sad, too?

BISHOP. No, you give me much pleasure. But I wasn't very tolerant when I was young. (*A cry in the garden . . . then silence.*)

MARY (*entering.*) Madam! . . . Oh, Your Reverence! . . . It's awful!

MOTHER. What?

MARY. Master John is hurt . . . his gun must have gone off! . . .

MOTHER (*with a cry.*) Is he dead?

MARY. I don't know . . .

MOTHER. Where is he?

MARY. They're bringing him . . . a workman from the Camuses who found him . . .

MOTHER. Where is he?

MARY. At the gate . . . I came on ahead.

BISHOP. Stay here . . . stay here. (*He goes out.*)

MARY (*sobbing.*) It was a workman from the Camuses . . . (RENNY *appears.*)

MOTHER. Renny! . . . your brother's dying!

RENNY. What?

MOTHER. His pistol must have gone off.

RENNY (*staring — says nothing.*)

MOTHER. He's out there. (*She indicates the garden.*) Go out . . Renny . . your brother . . your little brother . .

RENNY. Yes, I'm going. (*He stands still, legs trembling.*)

MARY. A workman from the Camuses who was passing . . . (NELLY *has heard from the top of the stairs.*)

MOTHER (*seeing her.*) My dear! . . . My poor children! . . . We let him have his pistol! . . . You didn't watch him . . . I should have . . .

MARY. There he is!

MOTHER. Oh! my children . . . I'm afraid! . . . (*The* BISHOP *carries* JOHN *in his arms. A workman follows, carrying a pistol.*)

MOTHER. Is he dead?

BISHOP. No. Wounded. (*They lay* JOHN *down on the couch. He is very pale, without apparent wound.*)

MOTHER. Johnny . . . what have you done . . . ? Can you hear me, Johnny?

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER. Are you hurt?

JOHN. Yes.

MOTHER. How did it happen?

BISHOP. The gun went off in his hand.

JOHN (*docilely.*) It went off.

WORKMAN. No, it didn't go off.

RENNY (*rushing forward, snatching the weapon.*) What?

JOHN (*docilely.*) It hasn't been fired.

MOTHER. I don't understand! What is it . . . ? Is it more serious . . . ? What has he done?

NELLY. He wanted to kill himself. (*A cry.*)

JOHN. You know, Renny . . . the soles . . . I don't miss one any more . . . I get them all . . .

BISHOP (*low.*) A doctor.

WORKMAN. My helper went for one.

MOTHER. Look at the pretty young girl who's here . . . who's come to take care of you . . . Look at her!

NELLY. I want to take care of you, Johnny.

JOHN (*looking at her a long time, then:*) Renny, tell me the truth: is it "she"?

RENNY. Yes, it's she.

JOHN (*a smile.*) Ah! you're all very kind . . . But in spite of being sick, I know it isn't true.

NELLY (*on her knees beside him.*) Johnny . . . It's I . . . recognize me . . .

JOHN. If you were "she", you wouldn't be here . . .

So much the worse . . . Some day she'll look for me . . . She's never thought of that . . . (*He laughs feebly.*) I hurt . . . Oh! I hurt . . . (*He seems to faint.*) . . . Don't make any noise . . . don't move the branches . . . be patient, they hear everything . . .

RENNY. What art you saying?

JOHN. It's too hard to fish . . . I've had enough . . . I'll be back tomorrow . . . The pistol isn't any good either . . .

RENNY. You'll catch some . . . you'll catch some . . .

JOHN. Oh, I don't know . . . I don't think so. (*His head falls and he is still.*)

MOTHER. Little one . . . He hasn't fainted again, has he? . . . What are you saying?

BISHOP. He's said everything.

NELLY (*throwing herself on him.*) Johnny!

CURTAIN.

ON POETRY

by Read Bain

For a long time I have been impressed by the number of people who try to write poetry. One of my earliest memories is of my father and mother toiling in kerosene lamplight over "poetry" to be read at the "literary" which met every two weeks down at Hebo Schoolhouse. Many other men and women in that pioneer community did the same. My mother was regarded as "pretty good" because the county papers and *Farm and Fireside* had printed some of her verses. Recently, Russell Lord has shown that thousands of rural men and women still write poetry, though the old-fashioned "literary" is almost extinct. Cowboys and lumberjacks, Negro field-hands and road-gangs, miners and sailors, tramps and casual laborers, simple folk everywhere, still sing old songs and recite verses which some unknown artist has created in some forgotten moment of intense feeling. These old songs and poems originate in the mysterious anonymity that always has characterized the art products of the folk: *"Sie fliegen über das Land wie Mariengarn; sie fallen aus der Luft."*

Whether factory workers write poetry, I do not know, but it is well known that the loungers, poolroom patrons, gamblers, sex exploiters, economically dispossessed, the urban equivalent, perhaps, of the rural folk, do have a rich, though largely unknown, literature of song and ballad. In the depths of the depression, someone wrote a song called *"Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?"* It was deeply felt and well-expressed, but it was too strong medicine for the weak stomachs and jittery nerves of those who liked to cherish the illusions of "prosperity"; so it was banned from the air, I have heard. It may still live in honkytonks and back alleys and may emerge some day as an enduring folksong of the depression. Many people admit that when driving alone on lonely roads, they "sing" at the top of their voices and even "make it up as they go along". People working around noisy machinery do the same. Children frequently "make up

little poems''. These attitudes and practices probably carry over into adult life. Our technological age doubtless is producing its folksongs, as all other cultures have done.

One gets additional evidence of this at the somewhat more literate and sophisticated level of high school and college. About a third of my students admit that they have written poetry, or still do. Most of them do not want people to know about their poetic efforts; they are shame-faced and self-conscious; they feel that the *real* men and women in our scientific, pecuniary culture will call them effeminate and sentimental; to be a poet offends the hard-boiled pose of our go-getting culture. So these modest rhymesters remain a secret segment of our booming, buzzing, mechanical society; they lisp their simple verses largely to themselves and to a few trusted friends.

Modern poetry is essentially an amateur art. Few can make a living at it, and those few must write topical verse for the smart magazines, or sentimental slush for the female Babbitts of the mighty Province of Pecunia. Probably more people write poetry than ever buy it to read. This sounds like an impossible paradox, especially in view of the fact that we spend plenty of the taxpayer's money trying to teach children to love poetry. Apparently, we succeed only in immunizing them against it, and, strangely enough, inspiring many of them to try to write it. The result is that enormous quantities of poetry are being written, much of high quality and some of great virtuosity. Perhaps no other culture in history has been so prolific as our own of poetry of high technical excellence. Much of it even gets printed — but neither publishers nor poets prosper thereby, and both wonder why.

Perhaps one reason is that poetry is too often taught by juiceless spinsters and shallow maids who never have lived the lusty lives out of which poetry is born; by callow young men, sans whiskers and viscera, whose knowledge of poetry is a phrase in the cortex instead of a song in the blood. Perhaps it is because taught poetry is too often a dead-age echo, meaningless to moderns. If we nurtured our children on the poetry of living poets and those recently dead, if we taught them to sing it, shout it, feel its

surge and sense its beauty, they might learn to love it; then they might acquire the poetic insight which would thrust them into the living past, untouched by the devouring tooth of time. This would require intellectually and emotionally superior teachers, people who themselves had drunk of the Pierian spring — not dull, desiccated creatures burdened by books, befuddled by critics, enslaved by rules, smothered by dusty conventions. Neither writing nor teaching poetry is a job for "nice" people; it is the vocation of people with courageous curiosity to see and sense old things in new ways. The poet finds the mystery and melody of the commonplace, the uniqueness and unity of the universe. Poetry is dead as Pan when it becomes a repetitious ritual in the hands of uninspired pedagogic priests.

Perhaps another reason is *the dominance of the eye in our culture.* The eye is the organ of efficiency. It takes in much at a single glance, both in perspective and in detail; it telescopes and condenses all the other senses; it functions by *implication;* the major specificity of the eye is its sensitivity to color; vision *implies* the sensations we ordinarily get from the other organs of perception; it gives us these experiences by a kind of psychic shorthand or synthetic symbolization. In our age of speed, the "long slow look" is rare, — the absorbing, thoroughly *sensing* contemplation of countryside, or single flower, or motion of man or beast. But for the poet, to *see* is to *sense.* When he looks at anything, he breaks up the synthetic act of vision into its contained or implied *sensa*: color, shape, taste, smell, sound, and touch. These are all fused in the hasty, superficial act of vision, but the poet reduces, or rather, exalts them, to their original sensory immediacy by his spectroscopic sensitivity. Touch is perhaps the most ancient, intimate, and stimulating way of sensing. Hence, poetic visual experience is translated into tactile sensation: how would the thing *feel?* — hot, cold, smooth, rough, and all the shades and varieties of these. He *sees* with his fingertips, with his pressure sense, with his lips, with all the inner and outer tactual organs of his body. Perhaps sound is the next most intimate way of sensing — or taste, or smell — all specializations of touch. He *sees* the thing in terms of all the sounds, tastes, and smells which it makes, is associated with, or implies. While

touch is the basis of most poetic *experience,* the sound of *words* is the means of poetic *expression;* hence, the poet *sees* in terms of the *sound of words,* his medium, the sound of the words which symbolize the tactual reality of experience.

Poetry is the use of words to communicate possible meanings of such experience. Emotion arises because of the "blocking" of movements of the muscles mediated by the tactual sensations (touch, taste, smell, sound). The "blocking" arises because the poet shows he never *sees all,* that there are no words adequate to express what he feels, that the meaning and significance of the experience are both problematic and inexpressible. He is a puny, partial man face to face with the raw reality of experience, with the mysterious power and extensity of the entire universe, Deep emotion inevitably results. To express some communicable semblance of this intense poetic experience is the poet's task. He never can succeed; he has only his pouch of pebble words and his sling of poetic art with which to slay this Goliath of the incommunicable. To *see* poetically is relatively easy; to *speak* poetically is the high privilege of few.

Let us suppose that the poet has *seen* with poetic vision and has been craftsman enough to *express* his experience in words capable of arousing in the reader a similar sensory experience. It takes time to transmute the hasty glance, or other sense-impression into the connotative sensory feeling of poetic experience, and more time and much loving labor to translate this intense poetic feeling, into a *communicating form,* a poem. This is not mere "emotion recollected in tranquility"; it is an immediate, exciting, creative act in the living present; and when it is over, the poet is sad with a two-fold sadness: because he knows the poem is merely a dim and dull appearance of the reality he has experienced; and because the struggle with mercurial words is over. The inexpressible pain and pleasure of the creative act can be experienced again only as a pale echo, when the poem is read; for *the poet,* even this is not "emotion recollected in tranquility," but a symbolic re-experiencing of things first born in the living, throbbing flesh.

If this is true of the poetry maker, it is doubly true of the poetry reader. He must use the poem he has not made

as a symbolic bridge to the poetic feeling he has experienced. To this extent, he becomes a creative artist. He must *say* the magic words, slowly, intensely,—thus transmuting them into the raw, personal, poetic feeling he himself has lived. He cannot do it by any hasty glance across the printed page, however fine the paper, however perfect the printer's and binder's art. He cannot read poetry while running for suburban trains, nor between "prospects" whom he hopes to "sell," nor at seventy miles an hour, nor at food-gulping "service" clubs and rattling restaurants. It is not true of poetry that "he who runs may read."

To read poetry means to *read it aloud.* It is a fine art demanding a sensitive ear, a skillful tongue, leisure, serenity, poise, and the ability to relate symbols to their original sensory experience. The art of reading poetry, like conversation and letter-writing, has been sacrificed to the god we moderns worship, — the Great God S-E-T: Speed-Efficiency-Tension. The reader may read poetry aloud to himself, to be sure. The spirit of poetry, however, like the Spirit of the Lord, is most likely to descend when two or more are gathered together. Poetry is a social experience. It should be read without bondage to the book, should be *said,* so that all the subtle artfulness of the voice may have free expression, so that gestures of face, hands and body may recreate as nearly as may be the tensions which originally gave rise to the poetic experience and its symbolic expression.

These conditions for the proper reading of poetry are almost non-existent in contemporary culture. The stultifying teaching of poetry may partially explain why more poetry is written than read, and why such reading as does exist is silent, superficial, and unsatisfying. Perhaps, when and if we master our machines and thereby bring back into the world serenity and leisure and freedom to *live,* poetry may be heard again in the land.

Romantics, mystics, critics, and prosodists have tried to define poetry with quite inconclusive results. Poets, too, discuss poetry; possibly their reflections are helpful to them even though they may be confusing to others. When Housman gives us the terrier-and-rat parable, we suspect that he really knows more about what he is doing than his words

imply; when Poe tells us just how and why he wrote "The Raven," we feel that he either has his tongue in his cheek or else knows less about it than he thinks he does. It seems futile to seek a definition of poetry by asking the poet what he thinks he is doing, and still more so by asking him why he thinks he does it. In most cases, he knows precious little about it and cares less.

Why does a bird sing? We cannot ask him, and so we *observe* him and arrive at an understanding both of what bird-song is and how it is done. To say that poetry *is* what poets *do* may seem like a definition that does not define, fit only to be cast aside as a tautological circularity. However, one of the most meaningful, that is convenient, useful and communicable ways of defining an activity is to state *explicitly* the *operations* involved in performing the action. Blacksmiths and cooks are people who use certain materials in specified ways to produce particular results. It is obvious that the *operations* and *materials* must be made explicit in such defining. When this is done, the definition is complete. Explicitly or implicitly, all definitions are tautological.

The poet uses verbal symbols to communicate his experience. His words refer to his own perception of objects, occurrences (interactive movements of objects), and relationships (inferential or direct generalizations) between things and events; or to similar first-hand experiences of others communicated to him symbolically; or to imagined experiences of self or others which have become sufficiently standardized to make possible some communication, however vague. When tested by the scales and acids of actual sense-experience, particularly when it is ordered by those conventional operations we call scientific, these coins of communication referring to imaginary experiences are found to be base and spurious.

Imagining is merely one of our many modes of responding to symbols. We *imagine* when we put symbols into novel combinations which assert relations between symbols of previous experience. Such imagined propositions may or may not be valid when tested by the sense experience which they assert or imply. Thus, it is convenient to speak of *factual* and *fantastic* imagination. Factual imagination is

the construction of propositions out of symbols which refer to commonsense or scientific facts or logical inferences from them. Such propositions may gain immediate acceptance, or be treated as *hypotheses* whose validity can be tested by the same empirical methods which established the original factual symbols. Fantastic imagination is the construction of propositions which are contrary to sensory experience, or to factual knowledge, or to logical inferences derived therefrom, and are incapable of empirical test. It is much easier to combine symbols into propositions by fantastic, than by factual, imagination. Fantastic imagining dispenses with the rigorous limitations of fact and logic and frequently *seems to say something,* especially if the verbal symbols used make a pleasing tinkle in the ear, when actually nothing has been said. Fantasy thought is essentially anarchistic, a-social, and subjective.

Some have tried to identify fantasy with art and fact with science, but all such efforts are necessarily doomed. Science is our method of generalizing fact; the consistent system of facts thus generalized constitutes our scientific knowledge. As we have defined it, fantasy can have no possible place in science, but factual imagination, — hunches, insights, and intuitions — has a very important place. It is an indispensable necessity in the construction of hypotheses. Obviously, much art is the product of fantastic imagination, but "great art" cannot be based wholly upon fantasy. One may derive a great deal of aesthetic satisfaction from a painting of a mythical monster if the drawing and coloring and design are sufficiently artful, but it will not be great art unless the meaning or value symbolized by the monster is based upon some enduring and relatively universal experience of mankind.

A poem about the gods, however technically fine, will cease to be great poetic art when the gods become myths, which is to say, symbols that no longer carry vital meaning. One may continue to respond poetically to the words as symbols of sensory experience, of course, even while being left completely cold or being actually repelled by the ideology of the poem. The *tradition* of the great poem may live for a long time; certain ringing lines and beautiful stanzas may achieve an enduring triteness on the tongues of men —

"the winedark sea", "the descent to Avernus", "plumb-down he drops ten thousand fathoms deep" — such lines live on, though gods and heroes and devils die. When phrased in Miltonian thunder or Virgilian felicity or Homeric magic, the words may preserve for ages a ghostly semblance of the life forever gone. A poem that is pure fantasy is pure nonsense; it can communicate nothing. Perfection of form is indispensable to great art, but it alone can never create great art; the symbolized experiences must also be "great", — vital values of enduring significance to successive generations.

Art and science must be clearly distinguished. Both communicate by conventional symbols; both depend upon the factual imagination. An element of fantasy may be admitted into art without entirely destroying it — never into science. Art and science are alike in the employment of techniques and the achievement of results which are aesthetically pleasing, that is to say, the symbols and operations of both science and art may satisfy all the canons of unity, coherence, parsimony, adequacy and significance. It is no figure of speech to speak of a beautiful experiment or a beautiful machine. Science is not factual knowing, while art is aesthetic experiencing, as some have contended; both are both. Likewise, it is fallacious to contrast them as intellectual - emotional, useful - pleasurable, objective-subjective, means - ends, and so on; both may be all these and much more. Both are ways of experiencing the universe (or aspects of it) and communicating with such experience by symbols. No aspect of experience is artistic or scientific *per se;* any experience may be material either for poet or scientist.

The most general difference between art and science is their use of a different set of symbols, frames of reference, and techniques for the purpose of communicating different aspects of experience. They are both phases of man's general effort to order, and thus to master, all of his responses to the physical, biological, and cultural factors in his experience, including the symbolized records of other men's responses to their experiences.

The symbols of science are words, drawings, models, and mathematical terms. Science uses these to describe the

relatively stable human sense impressions of the world with sufficient accuracy to predict what will occur under carefully defined conditions. Scientists clearly recognize that similar objects or events are never identical, that nothing remains the same for any successive instant, and that stability is always relative to a frame of reference. Consequently, both the facts and predictions of science, its principles and "laws", are "true", only in terms of probability. Scientific "causation" and "explanation" are merely the degree of probability that antecedent events have occurred and that consequent events will occur according to the conceptualized scheme of describing the behavior of constants which science has adopted. Science attempts to generalize particulars and to communicate propositions by unequivocal and unambiguous symbols. This is objectivity. The non-verbal symbols are merely operational techniques for standardizing sense experience and thus reducing the ambiguity of words. In practice, the making, recording, and manipulating of symbolized sense impressions are further standardized by instrumental devices. This standardizing is also done, of course, by logic. The goal of science is that all competent persons who use the same methods on similar data shall arrive at identical conclusions and that all these facts and findings in all fields of investigation shall be logically consistent. Science strives to *order* the *chaos* of experience, to find the generalized, relatively stable repetitive sequences in the occurrence of natural phenomena. It emphasizes the uniformity of the universe and the uniformity of man's responses to it.

Thus, the scientist's way of dealing with experience is very abstract, austere, and rigorously delimited. Most experience, i. e., neuromuscular response to external and internal stimuli, is never communicable at all and most of it that is communicated is on the level of vague, ill-defined common-sense and fantasy. Whatever the scientist thinks about fantasy, he is not contemptuous of common-sense. While much of it turns out to be nonsense when tested by the rigorous methods of science, much of it is also found to be consistent with the findings of science. In any event, man has to act continuously to live and for most such action, he must depend upon common-sense or what he believes to be

"sound reason", rather than upon scientific knowledge. Thus, he must *act,* even though later experience and scientific research shows his "reasons" to be false and his results to be disastrous.

The scientist also knows that he has no techniques for dealing with values, particularly with those we call taste and personal preference; yet much, if not most, of our behavior is mediated by such values. The scientist may investigate them as data, "explain" them in the sense described above, and show that they are inconsistent with scientific knowledge and with each other, but *as scientist* he has no concern with the *validity* of values. *As scientist,* he holds no values whatever, except those which are implicit in the methodology of science. He must observe, record, manipulate, and generalize his sense experience *honestly,* and report his findings unflinchingly, without fear or favor. He must never allow personal gain, whether of power, prestige, or pelf, to interfere with the religious performance of his duties as a scientist. He is the man of faith in the new dispensation of science. This faith in science has permeated the minds of men to such an extent that mounting millions of men and women everywhere are coming to regard any value which is inconsistent with the facts and findings of science and the logical inferences therefrom, as mythical, superstitious, fantastic, and destructive of human welfare. So science becomes a name to conjure with and is often used to defeat and destroy the work of science itself.

The symbols of poetry are words. With these as tools, poetry tills the boundless barren wastes of human experience uncultivated by science. While science seeks uniformity, poetry seeks uniqueness in the universe; it values the variety of man's experiences in his long personal and societal journey through this jungle world. The poet is not sure whether order or chaos is the fundamental characteristic of nature, whether reason or intuition is the essential nature of man, nor does he greatly care; he has no rigorous code, unless it be honest devotion to his craft. The only moral obligation he recognizes is a coercive imperative to sense life in all its aspects, ugly and beautiful, wise and foolish, and to symbolize it in lovely words, chosen by what magic only God — and the Critic — knows. He is the lens through

which is focussed life's meanings, values, aspirations, hopes, fears, frustrations and defeats with which science cannot deal and with which every man must live. Yearnings for things unrealized, passionate memories, prophecies of things to come, sensuous joys of the mysterious heaven and earth and earth's more mysterious floral and faunal carpet, sorrows, personal and societal, praise of heroes, hate of hate, scorn of scorn, love, birth, death, beauty — the poet *feels* these things intensely and symbolizes them in singing words, not in studied theorems. If he arouses some similar experience in a reader, even in *one,* he has written a poem; if this poem continues to quicken the flesh of many men in many stations of life for many years to come, it is a great poem.

Perhaps this is why so many people try to write poetry: they are lost in a world of increasing speed, tension, and impersonality; yet man remains — with his age-old questions still unanswered, his endless questing still unended. Perhaps poetry writing and reading is a substitute for the lack of close *rapport* once supplied by the intimate personal interaction of a folk society and the personalized fantasies of religion, a compensation for the fear-ridden loneliness so common in our culture where children are alien to parents, where fellow students and fellow workers do not know each other's names, where men are numbers in factories, where the art of friendship is lost or languishing, and where pecuniary values flourish. So it happens that many adolescent poets, when happily married, or wedded to their work, or sucked into the superficial fraternity of business association, write no more poetry. Some, however, well wedded to wife, work, and boon companions still feel the compulsive call to wrestle with words which symbolize for them the unattained and unattainable vision.

Poetic and scientific communication have been fairly well differentiated. It is more difficult to draw the line between poetic and prosaic use of words. The distinction cannot be made entirely on the basis of form. Some "prose" is poetic and much "poetry" is prosy. Much prose can be scanned almost as well as much blank verse, free verse, and even rhymed couplets and quatrains. Some poetry is almost devoid of figures of speech, fantasy imagination, and literary allusions while much prose is filled with them. It is un-

necessary to repeat that neither the subject matter nor the purpose of communication is scientific, prosaic, or poetic *per se*. The subject matter of all three is aspects of human experience, and the purpose is to arouse in others, by means of appropriate symbols, responses similar to those of the communicator. The most significant general quality of poetic, as contrasted with non-poetic expression, is its indefiniteness, a kind of blurring and confusion of the meaning of symbols so as to make them suggest and evoke similar sensory responses without producing an unemotive replica of the impressions of the poet. If the distortion is too great, then there is no communication; the induced emotion becomes pain, anger, disgust, resentment, or possibly confused curiosity, since it is almost impossible even for an ultra-modern poet to write pure, unadulterated nonsense. One end of the spectrum of communication is science, using unequivocal, highly standardized, extremely abstract mathematical symbols; the other end is the echolalia of a Gertrude Stein, the esoteric neologisms and etymological antiquities of a James Joyce. The poet falls somewhere between these two extremes; if he is too explicit, he falls into pure narrative, description, exposition, polemic, or didactic. If he is not sufficiently explicit, he communicates nothing.

It was asserted above that poetic is distinguished from non-poetic language by the fact that the poet consciously or unconsciously blurs the meaning of his symbols. This blocks our habitual response and gives the resultant behavior a heightened affective tone. This increases the tension in the entire organism, and such an affective tension calls for a resolution, for the achievement of a new equilibrium. This is attained partly by the automatic neuromuscular processes, stimulus-tension-fatigue-new equilibrium. This cycle characterizes all the behavior of living organisms. While this neuromuscular cycle is undoubtedly present in what we call mental-emotional behavior, we are accustomed to regard the new equilibrium as due to an "understanding of the problem," *i. e.*, a resolution of the symbolic unadjustment. This occurs when we have been aroused affectively, function on that level for a time, and then suddenly feel "This is it! I see it now." This resolution of tension is the basis of all pleasure in organic behavior. Effective stimulation pro-

duces an affective tension which continues until a new state of relative rest and quiescence, a new temporary equilibrium, is attained. The poet has another factor in his favor besides the technical trick of blurring his symbols: he commonly is dealing with aspects of experience in which his hearers have been involved personally in confused, inconclusive, problematic, and precarious ways. Their habitual responses to these things are diffuse, non-stereotyped, and hence blocked, emotionalized. If the poet deals with what appears to be prosaic, or even scientific aspects of experience, insofar as he treats them *poetically,* they will be personalized, distorted, removed from their customary contexts, and thus rendered problematic and precarious. Such treatment induces blockage of response, emotion, novelty, symbolic adventuring — in short, poetic experience.

If we approach poetry operationally, observing what poets actually do when they use words poetically, the most obvious thing is their *figurative* language. This is really a restatement of our thesis that poetic expression is inexact, confused, distorted, out-of-focus. A figure of speech is essentially analogical, if not actually a-logical. It attributes a trait or type of behavior or quality to an object which is not "true;" *i. e.,* not in accord with general common-sense or scientific knowledge. Prosodists have named many figures of speech but they all have this in common: they make an assertion which could be made more accurately by other words; they introduce a problematic ambiguity into the communication and thus produce symbolic blockage, which produces emotion, which is resolved into a new equilibrium. There are many techniques of distortion other than figures of speech. The following discussion of some of these is intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. It is also clear that the proposed categories are not exclusive, i. e., figurative language may be used with several, and possibly with all of them, and each may be used in connection with the others.

If a careful and explicit definition of the mechanisms of distortion were made, a quantitative determination of the frequency of each type in the work of particular men or a sample of men in a particular period would be possible. A standardized scale to measure the coefficient of distortion,

or poetic use of symbols, could be constructed which could be applied to any verbal communication. By arbitrarily assigning a point on the scale as that at which poetry began and prose left off, an objective distinction between prose and poetry could be made. Such a scale would be a kind of "verbometer" with which to measure the degree of blurring, or meaning distortion, ranging from the zero of pure, perfect, unambiguous scientific expression (seldom or never attained) to the boiling point of the "cult of incomprehensibility", where the apparent symbolic communication floats off into the vapors of sheer nonsense. Without pursuing further this possibility of constructing an objective instrument for measuring the degree to which any given set of verbal symbols is poetic, I shall content myself with the summary presentation of some of the more common mechanisms by which poetic blurring is achieved.

1. *Archaism.* The use of outworn, antiquated, rare, obsolete, and "poetic" words, idioms, and styles of diction. The reader is somewhat confused even when he knows accurately what the terms mean. A certain glamour of the strange, an implication of the long ago and far away, is introduced into the communication.

2. *Neologism.* The use of ultra-new, compounded, and coined words (or phrases) produces a sense of novelty and strangeness which heightens affectivity. "The red brick house" has a slightly different, less "poetic" connotation than "the redbrick house". "His redbrick face" and "his brickred face" are still more "poetic" in accordance with Principle 8 below. Both phrases convey slightly different impressions. This difference is *felt* even though it is difficult to analyze.

3. *Technologism.* The use of scientific and technical words out of context, for non-scientific and non-technical purposes. This is perhaps a variety of Principle 2, but it plays a sufficiently important and increasing part in modern poetry to warrant a separate category. "Today", or better, "December 22, 1939, at 10.00 a. m., at lat. 55° N., long. 62° W., the temperature (of the air in the shade) is 0° F." is a scientific statement but "Today, the Labrador of life shrinks to shady zero" is poetic. The main difference between the two statements is not the degree of abstract-

ness or explicitness. Both are very abstract and inexplicit. These are characteristics of all symbolic communication. The first statement is inexplicit because it takes for granted that the reader knows the frames of reference employed. In the second statement, the spatial, temporal, vital and thermal symbols are intriguingly vague, but in a context, they might convey a fairly explicit meaning or feeling. I put these symbols together myself, but I do not know *exactly* what they mean. No one possibly can. These statements illustrate the general difference between scientific and poetic communication, but they also illustrate specifically how poetic blurring is achieved by using the scientific symbols "Labrador" and "zero" in non-scientific connotations.

4. *Allusion.* Reference to other symbolic statements without definite identification and frequently without logical justification. Such references may be literary, scientific, historical, or mythical. This is so common in poetic writing that illustration is needless. If the allusion is too esoteric, it is obvious that nothing is communicated, or at least not what was intended. Frequently, the allusion is analogical or comparative; it usually blurs and complicates the communication and thus introduces overtones and heightens affectivity.

5. *Diction and Syntax.* This is the use of peculiar forms of punctuation, inversion, and juxtaposition; changing the functions of parts of speech; using meter, cadence, alliteration, rhyme, and onamatopoeia. All these devices, and others of this general sort, are departures from the customary use of language and therefore introduce varying degrees of distortion and complexity. Using adjectives and verbs as nouns and vice versa, capitalizing improper words, flinging colons about as Archibald MacLeish does, juggling the familiar order of words, hashing fonts, confusing spelling, playing fast and loose with all conventional marks in the manner of E. E. Cummings, are illustrations of some ways of producing symbolic blurring and thus increasing the suggestiveness and emotional quality of language. Formal meter, rhyme, cadence, alliteration, inversion, and sound-imitation are so commonly used by poets that this kind of diction is frequently regarded as the distinctive mark of poetry.

6. *Exoticism.* The use of foreign words and references to primitive, extinct, or peculiar cultures. "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a mighty pleasure-dome decree" is poetic; "In New York, John K. Jones let the contract for a new theatre" is not, although both sentences say much the same thing. Perhaps fantastic imagination is an exaggerated mode of this type of expression. It usually involves the falsification of sense experience by personifying inorganic or vegetal objects or abstractions and thus giving an illusion of sensory stimulation which, in fact, does not exist. This induces affective behavior which otherwise could not occur. Fantasy is a kind of hyperexoticism. Non-fantastic exoticism is a very effective poetic device.

7. *Exaggeration.* The use of over- and under-statement. This applies to all temporal, spatial, and qualitative aspects of things. Frequently, the technique employed is the simile or the metaphor, — both, methods of comparison. The opening lines of *Hyperion* are full of it; Milton and Dante made notable use of it; all poets use it more or less. Size, speed, time, and certain adjectival and adverbial qualities are our most useful means of describing things and occurrences. Poetic "license" with these produces that distortion of communication which I take to be the essence of poetry. Exaggeration is one of the most licentious ways of using language.

8. *Trait Transference.* This is the ascription of the characteristics of physical, vegetal, and animal, including cultural, objects to any of the other orders. This is usually done by one of the figures of speech or directly by adjectival reference. It would require more investigation than I have made to state which kinds of trait transference are most common. Probably poets differ individually and possibly periods differ in this respect. This would offer a good way of making objective operational analyses of poetic techniques — as, indeed, would all of the categories herein discussed.

9. *Action Transference.* This is similar to the above category except that here it is the action or behavior of the various orders which is ascribed to the other orders. Whether human traits and actions are more frequently ascribed to

non-human objects and organisms than vice versa, I do not know, but it is clear that much of our common-sense and even scientific reference is of this kind: "water runs down hill", "the sun rises". However, such conventional expressions are not poetic because they do not have the necessary element of symbolic blurring. We need to say "the river writhed and snarled", "the sun leaped up and ran across the sky", "his eyes froze and glittered", "the pond threw back its red Cyclopean wink".

10. *Sensory Transference.* This is the attribution of a particular sense experience to the responses of another sense organ. The poet smells, sees, tastes, and touches *sound*; smells, hears, tastes, and touches *colors,* etc.; or says he does. He may do this by the common figure of speech or by direct adjectival and adverbial reference. Perhaps this is based upon the well-known psychological phenomena of synaesthesia, although in most cases it is probably a symbolic trick rather than an actual sensory mechanism. Whatever its source, it is certain that such operations blur and confuse the communication for most readers, probably increase the sensory stimulation, and greatly heighten affectivity.

These are some of the most common techniques used in poetic expression. Anyone who uses them systematically, who employs the proper *operations,* can write poetry. It is true, of course, that the operator must be relatively unconscious of the mechanisms being used before he can operate effectively. This is equally true of all the arts — fine, technical, and scientific. Scientists and poets speak and use a different language, but commonly both are partially literate in both languages; most poets can read simple scientific language, most American college professors can read French and German, and most scientists can read simple poetry as intelligently and appreciatively as a child can read Mother Goose. However, to some highly specialized scientists, the language of poetry is utter nonsense; to some poets, the simplest science is mere pitter-patter. Darwin lamented his isolation from poetry; Goethe was almost equally literate in both languages. Frequently scientists who are extremely illiterate in poetry are fairly familiar with the language of music which, perhaps, is not so alien to their mode of thought

as the symbol-blurring language of poetry. The loose, licentious, allusive, figurative, personalized concentration upon symbolization of unique sensory experience, which is the poet's way of communicating, is frequently very offensive to one familiar with the logical, generalizing, careful, unambiguous use of symbols, which is the scientist's way of communicating. However, it would not seem more impossible for the scientist to learn the language of poetry than for the Frenchman to learn Chinese. Probably the poet is more literate in science than the scientist is in poetry.

I have said that anyone who masters the rather simple operative techniques of poetry can write poetry. This is not to say that such mastery will produce "great" poets. Mastery of the techniques of music, or golf, or science in any field does not *ipso facto* produce masters or masterpieces. There are many subtle factors involved in the production of creative work in any line of endeavor. As yet, these are not analyzed and, perhaps, may be unanalyzable. However, as has been said above, the social situation, the time, the place, the technical skill, and the subsequent trends of culture are all factors which enter into the determination of the greatest of poets and poems. It is safe to say that our culture will never again produce a poet who will duplicate *Paradise Lost, The Divine Comedy* or *The Iliad.* That type of fantasy thought, that cultural frame of reference, is too alien to our culture. The stars in their courses, or rather, the engines in their factories, the guns in their emplacements, the clerks in their counting-houses, the gods and goddesses in Mount Hollywood, the professors in their cloisters, and the reporters in Megalopolis are fighting against it. The Dantes and Miltons of our age will have to sing the epic of the laboratory, observatory, smelter, forge, machine shop, aeronautical cavern of the winds, the inferno of the slums, the demons of Downing Street, the titans of Wall Street, the magic of the test tube, and the big medicine of the hypodermic needle. Some better balanced Hart Crane may swing the Bridge of Singing Steel, 'twixt heaven and earth. Some more penetrating Alfred Noyes may fitly sing the Watchers of the Skies. Some less sentimental Sandburg may write the epic of midwest Smoke and Steel and the final Conquest of the Soil. Some future Homer may immortalize

the imminent Trojan War or Armageddon which momentarily threatens to bring a new dark age, possibly to be followed by a new Grecian age of light. The great poetry of this age is yet to be written. Perhaps an age must be dead or dying before it can be sensed vividly enough and seen in sufficient perspective to make great poetry possible. Certainly the mythology of science will inspire future poets as the Greek and Roman and Christian myths have inspired those of the past.

Poetic expression results from a mode of knowing which is as different from that of science as the symbols of poetry are different from those of science. It is unlikely that science will ever displace this mode of experiencing and expressing; it undoubtedly will change the context and content of poetry; but the essential techniques and operations, the general characteristics of poetry will remain pretty much what they always have been. This fundamental character of poetry is a highly emotionalized way of perceiving the world and a blurred, distorted expression of such experience in pleasing verbal symbols; a mode of communication which *suggests* more than it *says;* which is connotative rather than denotative. If this is true, poetry will not pass; it will be written and enjoyed while the world stands.

JEALOUSY

A Drama by Gustavo Adolfo Becquer
Translated by George H. Daugherty, Jr.

"Jealousy, that most terrible monster." — Calderon.

CHARACTERS:

Rafael: *A conspirator for Venetian independence, member of the Brotherhood of Liberators of Venice. He is in love with Julia.*
Jacobo: *Friend of* Rafael, *and fellow member of the Brotherhood.*
Bautista: *A gondolier, member of the Brotherhood.*
Julia: *A Venetian lady, in love with* Rafael.
A Venetian Lady: *Mother of* Julia, *member of an aristocratic family.*
Maskers: *Members of the Brotherhood of Liberators of Venice.*
Maskers, dancers, ladies and gentlemen, guests at the ball, etc.

SCENE I.

The sea. Venice in the distance. It is just before dawn. Jacobo *and* Rafael *in a gondola.*

Jacobo. Does the wound bother you?

Rafael. No . . . it's nothing . . . a scratch; as he fell, he gave me a last thrust, but with no strength behind it . . . And he?

Jacobo. His seconds took him away in a gondola; I don't know where, perhaps to his house.

Rafael. Did he groan when they carried him to the gondola?

Jacobo. No.

Rafael. He must be dead.

Jacobo. Or else he had fainted.

RAFAEL. If he is dead, his father's vengeance will be terrible.

JACOBO. In any case, you must get out of Venice before daybreak, and leave Italy as soon as you can.

RAFAEL. Before daybreak! . . . It will be light in an hour.

JACOBO. That's why I think what you are doing is insane . . .

RAFAEL. Insane! For her I have killed a man, whom I hated only on her account . . . ; for her I have endangered the lives of our Brothers, sworn colleagues in our great enterprise . . . ; for her I have left my mother, old as she is, alone, exposed to the revenge of my enemies, and I have lost my home and my country, perhaps forever. And yet you want me to leave her without even saying farewell?

JACOBO. Since nothing is more useless than advice which is certain to be disregarded, I will say nothing to oppose your idea; but I will go on thinking it either lunacy or blind rashness — which comes to the same thing.

RAFAEL. Raise your oars . . . We've arrived. (RAFAEL *jumps ashore.*) Will you wait for me here?

JACOBO. I'll wait here . . Oh, listen! . . One moment . . When you see day breaking, just remember that if the sun finds us in this place, it will not only cost your head, but mine as well . . . (RAFAEL *goes away.*) It's the only way he can have this woman who has driven him mad; otherwise it would be impossible to get him away. (*Lying down in the bottom of the gondola.*) Ah, Love! Love! If there were no jealousy, it would be a paradise without a snake.

SCENE II.

The same. RAFAEL *climbs aboard the gondola. Day begins to break.*

JACOBO. The sea has scarcely begun to gleam with the first light, and yet here you are! You have kept your word.

RAFAEL. I remembered you.

JACOBO. So I see.

RAFAEL. What shall we do now?

JACOBO. Pull down your hood to hide your face . . .

lay hold of the oar, and let's row in the direction of the anchorage. But wait! You seem to have fever . . . Let's see this wound . . . And yet you said it was nothing, that you scarcely even felt it!

RAFAEL. Now it does begin to bother me a little.

JACOBO. So! . . . Let go that oar, lie down in the gondola and rest

RAFAEL. No, I'm all right this way.

JACOBO. You're all right! What's this? Ah, now I understand. You can still see the palace where she lives.

RAFAEL. I love her so!

JACOBO. And she?

RAFAEL. She has sworn to wait for me . . . until the day I can return.

JACOBO. And if it should be years?

RAFAEL. She will wait for me till death. She has promised.

JACOBO. And will she keep it?

RAFAEL. Is it possible to lie when one is weeping?

JACOBO. A woman can lie under any conditions.

RAFAEL. Can one swear a thing by the memory of a father, and then not do it?

JACOBO. A woman can swear falsely in the name of God Himself.

RAFAEL. Bah! You believe in nothing —

JACOBO. On the contrary, I believe in everything.

SCENE III.

The cellar of a tavern. JACOBO *and other young men, masked and disguised in fantastic costumes, are drinking around a table on which lies an unsheathed knife. In one corner, another man, likewise masked, is drinking alone.*

JACOBO. Are we all of the Brotherhood? (*directing an uneasy glance at the solitary masker.*)

FIRST MASKER. All of us. The inn-keeper allows no one to enter the cellar except those who give the passwords. And no one knows those words save the Brothers.

SECOND MASKER. And what is the business of our meeting?

JACOBO. To select the one who must execute an enemy.

THIRD MASKER. Why must he die?

JACOBO. He must die because he has broken his word, given solemnly before beginning a duel with one of our Brothers; because he has taken vengeance on our Brother's mother, who is, perhaps even now, dead in prison . . . because, although he is a drunken German, he is about to marry an Italian lady.

THIRD MASKER. And she?

JACOBO. She shall live, because the only one who has a right over her life is not here.

The solitary masker rises from the table where he has been drinking, seizes the knife lying on the other table, and at the same time removes his mask.

RAFAEL. She shall die.

ALL. Rafael!

RAFAEL. Tonight there is a ball in the Doria palace. If one of the guests at the ball should open the door, any party of maskers may be able to enter the ball-room without difficulty.

JACOBO. But . . .

RAFAEL. Which of you will go first to open the way?

JACOBO. I.

RAFAEL. Will they not suspect you?

RAFAEL. Less than anyone. But what are we going to do at this masked ball?

RAFAEL. I have found out that she will be present, and what costume she will wear.

JACOBO. Have you considered this well?

RAFAEL. When you were casting doubt on the truth of certain oaths, I, myself, made one . . . I made it only in my mind . . . nevertheless, time will show you whether or not it will be kept . . Let us go to the Doria palace.

ALL. To the Doria palace.

SCENE IV.

Night. A street in Venice. BAUTISTA *is stretched out asleep in his gondola which is rocking at its moorings by the quay.* JULIA *enters, wrapped in a dark cloak.*

JULIA. Bautista.

BAUTISTA. Señora.

JULIA. You know where Rafael is.

BAUTISTA. Rafael is in Paris.

JULIA. No. I have written him, but he has not answered.

BAUTISTA. Then . . .

JULIA. You know where to find him.

BAUTISTA. Why should I know it?

JULIA. You belong to the Brotherhood of the Liberators of Venice.

BAUTISTA. I!

JULIA. Are you afraid that I will denounce you? . . . The Brothers communicate with each other by secret messages; better than anyone else, you can manage to get this letter into the hands of Rafael . . . Keep in mind that it is of the greatest importance . . . the very greatest . . . perhaps a matter of life and death . . . I do not offer you anything, because I know that if I did, you are bound to do nothing. (JULIA *disappears.*)

BAUTISTA (*after pausing a moment, turning the letter over in his hands.*) There's no doubt of it. This woman knows me. Rafael! Rafael! To tell the truth I know as much as she does in this business . . . but . . . Bah! The Brothers will tell me.

SCENE V.

A salon in the Doria palace. JULIA *and her mother seated at one side among other ladies.* RAFAEL, JACOBO, *and their friends disguised and masked. Couples ready for the dance. The orchestra plays a waltz.*

RAFAEL (*approaching* JULIA.) Lady Mask . . . Will you dance with me?

JULIA (*aside.*) That voice seems . . . but no, it is impossible.

RAFAEL. Lady Mask, the prelude ends, the waltz begins. How must I interpret your silence?

JULIA. God in Heaven! If it should be he? (*To her mother.*) Take this. (*Dropping her fan and bouquet in her mother's lap. Then turning to* RAFAEL.) Just one dance.

No more. (*They disappear among the throng of dancers. The mother leans over to one of the ladies beside her.*)

THE MOTHER. Girls will be girls. Today, anyone would have said she was going to die of grief, she wept and wailed so much before deciding to accept the husband we picked for her . . . And now she is dancing! . . . As if anyone should pay attention to children . . . (RAFAEL *and* JULIA *pass by, dancing.*)

RAFAEL. Is it true that you are going to be married?

JULIA. Yes, it's true. (*They disappear again among the dancers.*)

THE MOTHER. And she said, "Just one dance." When it comes to dancing, they're all alike. Nevertheless, to tell the truth, at her age I hadn't a bit more sense. More? Not as much . . . Ay! If I had only paid as much attention to my mother's advice as she has paid to mine, today! (RAFAEL *and* JULIA *dance by again.*)

RAFAEL. You say it's impossible?

JULIA. Impossible! (*They disappear again in the crowd.*)

THE MOTHER. Another dance? *Jesus!* . . . She has to go to extremes in everything . . . Thank God, her fiancé has not appeared yet . . . If he had, I'm sure there would be a scene . . . All the same, when she comes past again, I'm going to give her a signal. So much dancing will tire her out. Is she doing it to deaden her grief? (RAFAEL *and* JULIA *appear again and pause a moment.*)

RAFAEL. And you can't say a word to excuse your action?

JULIA (*pausing for a moment, then speaking in a muffled tone.*) Nothing . . .

RAFAEL. God have more mercy on you than he has had on me. (*He drops a white handkerchief.*)

JACOBO (*to the others of the band.*) He has let fall the handkerchief . . . Surround them . . . (*The party of maskers forms a ring about the two lovers, and whooping and dancing around them, carry them away into the crowd.*)

THE MOTHER. What a war-whoop! What screeching! They will frighten her . . . This time, she *must* stop dancing. (*She rises.*) Where is she going? I don't see her . . . and it's no wonder, because that band of lunatics have formed a

circle completely around her. A scream! . . . Won't this music ever stop? . . . No. It seems to go faster all the time . . . She will certainly be ill . . . Ah! Now I see her. Didn't I say so? She *is ill.* She can scarcely stand . . . (*The band of maskers comes back with a frightful uproar of voices, screeching, weird cries and laughter, which almost drown out the music.* RAFAEL, *still masked, carries* JULIA, *apparently in a dead faint, in his arms.*)

THE MOTHER. Here! Lay her down upon this sofa. (RAFAEL *places her on it, seated; he hesitates a moment before leaving the spot, from which he is dragged by* JACOBO.) My God, she is as pale as a corpse! . . . Julia, Julia! . . . (*Chafing her forehead and hands.*) What is this? *Blood, blood! They have murdered her!* . . .

FINAL SCENE.

The cellar of the tavern. RAFAEL, *seated, motionless, at a table at the back.* JACOBO, BAUTISTA, *and some others of their band in the foreground.*

BAUTISTA. I have a letter for brother Rafael. Where shall I send it?

JACOBO. Place it in his own hands.

BAUTISTA. Is he in Venice?

JACOBO. See. There he is. Rafael. Rafael!

RAFAEL (*as if coming out of a deep trance.*) Who wants me?

BAUTISTA. I've a letter for you. A masked lady gave it to me, and said it was very important to you.

RAFAEL. It is her writing! . . . She is not dead! . . . When did you get this letter?

BAUTISTA. Last night.

RAFAEL. At what time?

BAUTISTA. At eleven.

RAFAEL (*hastily breaks the seal and reads:*)

Rafael: Your mother, whom everyone believes to be dead, is still alive, even though she lives in a prison cell . . . The price of her liberty is — not my love, for that is and ever will be yours — but my hand.

When you receive this letter, I will already belong to another man.

I have everything ready to escape from him as soon as I have kept my word. I have written you nothing about this because I wished neither you nor myself to hesitate a moment in sacrificing our own happiness for the life of her who suffers through our fault.

Good - bye . . . I promise that I will wait for you . . . If it may not be on earth, I will wait for you in heaven.

Good - bye, good - bye.

JULIA.

CURTAIN.

TWO SPEECHES

By FRANZ WERFEL

Translated from the German by MANFRED KLEIN

I.

THE IDEA OF GOD AND THE HUMANE IDEAL

When I reflect upon what I have written since 1910, I find always the same basic sentiment, namely horror at the thought of man completely unrestrained, godless, icy (a type existing at that time almost only in theory); and at the same time I note the attempt to set up against this growing species a world-friendly being, which with fervent pleas keeps charging us not to forget the cosmic brotherhood of all that is living and mortal. During the years of the war as well as a short time before and after, there were several individuals who felt, thought and spoke in similar fashion, indeed hoped after the catastrophe for a great metaphysical awakening of mankind and prophesied it. They knew that without this awakening, without a great primordial re-experiencing of the miracle of life, all religions would gradually wither, the arts vanish and the sovereign spirit of man abdicate in favor of its servant, the intellect. Without the idea of God there can be no humane ideal, just as there can be no true socialism without a transcendentally fixed love of mankind. This they divined, and dreamt between 1918 and 1919 that the time had come. But the time had not come. An epochal moment of history had passed by without striking a spark. The war did not release a God-filled impulse. Upon the catastrophe there followed not a metaphysical awakening but rather a profound slumber, during which man considered his sovereign spirit to be a by-product of his economic order or of his biological constitution. In place of the hoped-for awakening, there was only a murmuring by several eccentrics in their sleep, which murmuring was then classified by certain professors and literary critics as "expressionism".

During the twenty years since that time, the sleep of nations and men has become even sounder. Perhaps here and there a stray individual still stops short in the midst of the turmoil and marvels at the secret of life. Certainly there are living on this planet now as at all times more perceptive spirits who are susceptible to metaphysical impulses and reflections. But this fact finds neither expression nor acceptance. They are hermits who mean nothing to the present age. I do not believe that any generation was ever more unconsciously engrossed in its earthly turmoil than this one. Indeed, *cosmic unconsciousness* is the most characteristic feature of this era of flight into the stratosphere and of the theory of relativity. People seem to be producing their wild positivistic noise in order to avoid hearing, with the ears of the spirit, a disturbing voice. Natural science has completed its grandiose work of destruction. This development was doubtless inevitable. Now, for the average person, the human body is a complicated organism of many kinds of cells and the human soul a secondary manifestation of internal secretions. Technology is trying to catch up with science. The earth is like a house in the process of repair. Some rooms have become more livable. But why are *we* growing unhappier from year to year? What has happened? The guiding star over our heads has disappeared, having grown paler century by century. The way has become free . . .

II.

The way has become free? Free for whom?

A modern American motto comes to mind: "Nothing succeeds like success". Truly, an insidiously evil idea! It may at first seem harmless enough, but one begins to understand its diabolical implications when one varies it. For example: Nothing is more powerful than power, *i. e.,* once the guiding star has disappeared, once the scale of values based on ideal assumptions has been done away with, then it suffices that as large a number of blockheads as possible should embrace an evil cause, that as large a number of criminals as possible should rally to some vile power, to make them absolute and to justify them. For even the man who has lost his bearings wants to worship. And what could

be easier to worship than success and power, these earthly divinities which alone are tangible and compelling? Souls which otherwise are without orientation are ready to bow eagerly before these two idols. In this fact lies one reason for their uncontested world supremacy. One can see now for whom the way has become free: for the dictatorship of those completely devoid of principle, for mocking ghouls.

For the first time, perhaps, since the decline of Rome the world is learning that godlessness, the collapse of the scale of values metaphysically established, occasions the most practical consequences. In the bourgeois era this might have still passed as harmless. The educated classes expressed enthusiasm for Nietzsche's destruction of the Christian ideal and for his deification of the beautiful, aristocratic animal. For after all, nothing unpleasant could happen. The framework of the old values might be cracking, but it still stood. Church tempests in the present German manner were unthinkable. The state guaranteed, at least on the surface, the equality of persons before the law, Oaths were binding. Agreements were not a mockery. And if at any time justice was distorted by the ruling caste, there were always bold men, passionate accusers, who rose up to call for repair of the moral damage.

Do I have to ask what justice means today? Is it not perfectly clear proof for everything I have said if justice, this sacred safeguard between man and man, crumbles into nothing when the origin of all justice, enthroned high above men, is no longer recognized? *Homo homini lupus,* says the proverb, but not only does man act toward man like a wolf, but also nations, classes, groups with special interests, collectives of all sorts behave toward each other far worse than wolves. For that reason all earthly tribunals have from ancient times been thought of ideally as courts of arbitration, which keep in view an eternal arbiter whose gentle judgment is to exercise an equalizing and moderating influence on one's own decision. If, howeved, the arbiter is lost sight of — this principle of eternal causation and hence of responsibility — upon what is all justice based? The answer must be: upon its absolute antithesis, *i. e.,* upon naked power. But if the power rests in the hands of criminals who make laws based on their own whim or advantage, on lies,

hatred, lewdness and insanity, then justice becomes a crime and law legalized depravity. And this precisely is the most advanced stage at which this world without God has arrived.

III.

This is also, no less precisely, the stage at which the great new diaspora begins. If it is principally the classic people of the diaspora which is affected by it, it nevertheless does not this time remain alone. All true Christians, *i. e.*, those truly possessed of Christ, join it, and in addition the innumerable others in whose souls the flames of brotherliness and indignation have not been extinguished. If their sympathy is effectively manifested to so small a degree, one must not forget that along with the outward exile an inward one is spreading, still silent, to be sure, but growing mightily from day to day. A secret chasm is opening throughout the world, of which the world has not yet become aware. Upon the one side stands that majority for whom life means no more than a causeless, effectless, purposeless and spiritless process of nature, which therefore individually and collectively worships success and power as its gods and succumbs to every sort of mock-heroic criminality. On the other side stand those cast out or withdrawn into outward or inward exile, who divine and believe in a transcendental, sovereign and absolute spirit behind the world of appearances. This opposition will develop into the historical conflict of the future.

The exceptional grace has been imparted to the Christian churches to be allowed to return to their origin and to descend once more into the catacombs. The ancient folk of the diaspora is again going into exile, as at all holy epochs. That this might again take place in our age of scientific method, historical materialism, psychoanalysis and all modern comforts, this nation, in the naïve belief in progress which all imperilled people share, would not have considered possible. How is any modern mind to account for the fact that a new paganism had to come into being just for the purpose of getting rid of ancient Israel, as if it were the year 600 B. C.? But there is also something else which the great majority of this nation would not have deemed possi-

ble. For example, that it would again bear its ancient God through the desert (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), this unique extra-cosmic creator, the changeless lodestar of the human spirit and human morals, whom thousands of years ago it presented and forced upon a world which was no less nationalistic and nihilistic than the world of to-day.

To be sure, exile is for most of them a fate, a misfortune, an unpleasant episode, and certainly no profound mystery. One cannot expect hunted people seeking protection to empty the cup of bitterness with interpretive consciousness. And yet they have all learned one thing from the course of events which the rest of the world had long forgotten: to distinguish between good and evil. For they have, under shrewd pedagogical direction, been sent to the school of absolute evil. Now they know something more than those others about them who are in a pitiable state of indecisiveness, who say Yes and No, On the one hand and On the other hand, and in a strange obduracy still fail to comprehend who and what is threatening them. This newly acquired power of discrimination, however, this firmness and sureness, this immunity against the temptation of corruptness in the midst of a morally decaying Babel of principles, is the tremendous and immeasurable advantage of those who have passed through the school of evil.

RETURNING HOME TO THE REICH

We are living in a carnival of mad distortions. Concepts have gone awry. Right about face, left about face, everything is topsy-turvy. The oldest idea suddenly sparkles with the gleam of youth; the new, just a moment ago triumphant, lies writhing in its death agony. Truly, Right and Left — this brave offspring of classic parliamentary geography — have been thrown into confusion to the point of being unrecognizable. The spirit of history is playing blind man's buff with us.

One of the maddest distortions reads: "Return home to the Reich". The slogan was invented on March 11, 1938, by Greater Prussia and was directed at Austria. But what is the Reich? And who is returning home?

More than one hundred thirty years ago, the name of the Holy Roman Empire vanished from the tablets of history. This tremendous event was brought about rather inconspicuously at the height of the Napoleonic era by the complete separation of the Austrian monarchy from the German principalities and minor states with which it had previously maintained a traditional and brittle relationship. In reality however the sacred Imperium Romanum lived on in the form of the Austrian Empire; it had only, forced into the defensive, withdrawn along the line of least resistance and assembled its forces. The palladium of the imperial idea, though hidden and almost forgotten, remained within its borders. Beyond those borders however, in German lands which had lost the demon-exorcising palladium, the power of the ancient, oppositional gods, now unbound, began to revive — the gods who believed themselves forever rid of the mysterious restraint. 1813, the year of "national upheaval", and German Romanticism in many of its manifestations, are stages of this development, which had been initiated half a century earlier by the German-hater, Frederick II, that most thorough-going of all cynics of power. The old demons, however, which Charlemagne and Boniface had exterminated, seized power under the name of nationalism and did not hesitate to ally themselves, according to their needs of the moment, with the most modern intellectual currents of science and incipient Socialism. It is they which have lent to German nationalism from its beginning those cannibalistic over- and undertones, that presumptuous malignity and sullen pugnacity which one would look for in vain, for example, in the noble and generous-hearted Risorgimento of the Italians. As the Germans, ever since Luther, had been turning away, step by step, from the transcendentally universal idea of empire, this development was inevitable. It is only sad that the small nations between the Alps and the Carpathians have taken no better nationalism than the German variety as a model for their own. The account of their awakening is at the same time the account of the sickness of the old Reich.

I am not one of the determinists, who consider every fact inescapable and refuse to recognize the validity of any "if" in the course of history. It is my conviction that the

war of 1914 could easily have been avoided. The blame for it attaches to a ruling caste in Vienna kept in leading strings by Greater Prussia, feeble and given to bullying; part of it, incidentally, is now said to have adopted, logically enough, a most passionate Führer cult. But if the war, criminal as it was, could not be checked, could not at least St. Germain have been avoided — that Golgotha of Europe? Who is to blame for the destruction? One can only answer: the weakness of human intellect which cannot foretell a political situation three weeks ahead, to say nothing of a decade. Neither the conquerors nor the conquered dreamt in their intoxication or in their distress that the destruction of the ancient Imperium Romanum in the shape of the Austrian Empire would so soon imperil their own existence. And yet it may be well that such is the case. Perhaps we should sing: *jubilate, exultate!* Nothing short of our suffering — the tragic catharsis through which not only Austrians, exiled at home and abroad, have to pass, but Czechs and Hungarians as well — nothing short of this purifying flame can revive in thousands of people, as a yearning and a necessity, the ideal of the empire which binds nations together.

Ideae ante res, says the Latin. One can expand the ancient maxim: *ideae ante et post res.* For ideas are but lasting spiritual principles of creation which — even if apparently cancelled for a time — again and again, and in ever new forms, subjugate the world of reality. A mere national state is by no means an empire, even if it rules over colonies. Only the addition of a spiritual principle of creation, of a transcendental idea, of an all-inclusive human mission which it serves powerfully and consciously, imparts to it the consecration of an empire. The third Reich, no matter with what terrible reality it weighs upon Europe and upon itself, is nothing more than a fraudulent arrangement of words.

Yet even in the small, maimed Austria after 1918, the palladium was still somewhere concealed. Very few knew of it, but in the thing which was called Austrian humaneness, irony, charm, a trace of the vanished sanctuary was visible. The Prussians, who have insolently seized the old imperial crown, will not find the lost treasure.

The empire, of which we are here speaking as of a last-

ing idea among changing forms, was founded by an emigré, the pious Trojan hero, Aeneas, who, fleeing out of Ilium's ruins, after a hundred dangers at boundary lines, difficulties in entry and, as befits an experienced refugee, after a sojourn in the underworld, finally landed on the coast of Latium. Not his own impulse but Providence, the will of the gods, brings him, often rebellious, through misery and struggle to his goal — as Virgil tells us in pure and sweet verses. A strange myth: not in blood and soil, not in kind and race, lies the origin of world-dominating Rome; no, a total stranger, an Asiatic, grief-stricken and destitute, a man without an earthly home traverses the sea. According to the philistine notions current today, this man is a highly suspicious individual, a candidate for immediate expulsion. He calls nothing his own except a divine mission, a prophetic spirit and a strength of soul tested in the underworld. This delicate Trojan, and no strong-armed lout or muscular boor of the Latin fields, is destined to be the founder of the true Imperium which lasts from Romulus to Caesar, from Augustus to Charlemagne and from the latter to the last of the Hapsburgs. What hidden lesson has the myth to teach us? It teaches that he who is chosen to exercise legitimate power before man and God comes from without, has passed through misery and death and has withstood the afflictions of exile. It teaches further that only he has the right to erect the obligatory, equalizing Imperium over nations and races who has conquered nationalism in himself, who has made the *sacrificium nationis.* When Aeneas set foot on Italic soil, he had forever put off the Trojan.

Sacrificium nationis, the renunciation of the demonic, earthbound, blood-conditioned instinct of our soul in favor of a higher, world-spanning union — is not that the eternal imperial ideal, the ideal of Austria? Had not the educated Austrian conquered in himself the nationalism of the German, the Czech, the Slovene, etc., in order to become a new man, less colorful perhaps, but freer and more just than before? People of this ideally abstract kind were Prince Eugene, Grillparzer, Francis Joseph, but likewise T. G. Masaryk as well, whom fate had destined to destroy the last embodiment of the empire. Beside these symbolic figures, however, thousands of nameless men of every race and

kind were active, the much reviled "privy councillors", who created the miracle of that just, supra-national administration, which was whole-heartedly admired even by such a fanatical advocate of the Italian revolution as Stendhal.

Awakening nationalism has demolished the structure, piece by piece. Finally, the godless hordes, in whose midst originated the rebellion against the spirit of humaneness, invaded Vienna, yelling, plundering, murdering. They extinguished not only the existence but even the name of Austria, for, in the superstitious fear of the evil-doer, they dread the very word which makes public their crime. They are right in fearing the name. The idea which it expresses, mightier than ever, is ready to be realized.

We do not know in what shape the old-new empire will manifest itself. We do know that, under the atmospheric pressure of terror and despair, it is growing up between the Rhine and the Black Sea like a crystal. We do not know in what political form and constitution the empire will come to life. But we are at least sure that the hysteria of nationalism and the criminal mob-rule will be broken when it arrives. We know even more. The detriments and evils of the past embodiment of Austria, the anachronistic privileges and compromises stemming from the age of feudalism, will not partake in the resurrection. The humane ideal, in its most advanced formulation, wishes to create not only a supra-national but a truly social empire, the first social empire on earth perhaps, independent of class rule and economic theories, a community of *free* souls, the long dreamed of *civilitas humana.*

How rich, after all, we are in our exile, no matter how long it may last, richer than others! For in a world of complete confusion and distortion we know to the best of our faith and will, *whither* we shall return.

TEN POEMS

By STEFAN GEORGE

Translated from the German by C. NORTH VALHOPE

I.

With shield and dagger under ashen frieze
The Infant smiles with pallid face in gold-
Encrusted sombre oval. Briefly stayed
Within the hall, where then no touch was laid,
A twin-begotten child: the frosty breeze
From hills had proved a playmate all too bold.

But he himself will never grieve at all
That he has not become a man and grim
Like this or that one on the neighboring wall,
For blessedness has been accorded him:

When glass pom'granates to the moon unclose
He is companioned by a shining elf,
And follows often flying and in fall
With her the fondly cherished silken ball,
That, colored olive green and like the rose,
Is gleaming still upon the oaken shelf.

— *Hymnen*

II.

Tell me on what path today
She will come and wander by,
That from treasure chest I may
Lift a web that silken blows,
Violet gather and the rose,
That I lean my cheek to lie
Underfoot for her repose.

— *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*

III.

The grains within the glass are running few,
Then follow him, the wanderer drenched in dew,
By burning air afar and swift beguiled,
The friend of flowers and the starry child.

Who once, before the harvest knew the blade,
His hands in sorrow on his forehead laid,
And by who knows what early curse apprised
In this the final day of youth surmised.

Who softened by the sun's caress no more,
Light as a summer bird above the shore,
While he was beautiful, without lament
Upon that day from out our circles went.

— *Das Jahr der Seele*

IV.

Recall the terrors that since you became
My own, in aeons of oblivion lie,
Since only I bestow the cup of flame
That shall enrapture you until you die.

You thanked me then as for a boon supreme
That in my peace no longer you were faced
With parching summer's wild and blazing gleam
That drove you homeless out into the waste.

When to my house — so high — you gave no heed,
"This one and only fleeting glance of choice,
And I deny the altar and the creed,"
So anguish seared the darkness with your voice.

Before the hearth the victim upward reared,
The purple burned as straw in weightless pyre,
Around the column hilts the torrent veered,
Till all the temple shone and shook with fire.

— *Der Teppich des Lebens*

V.

Ask not what words the highest praise shall gain,
Nor at the feast what song the wreath. Today
The yester-storm that swept the bitter plain
Is sacred westwind in the laurel spray.

Now it was growing crystal all unstained
And light, that through the clear of morning beamed,
Now it was flowing agate darkly veined,
A ruby then that violently gleamed.

What as a warm and gentle murmur drew
Adown the fading lane that we forsake,
And only as a drop of bloomy dew
Fell from the flower to the hollow lake,

Grew brimming moisture breaking through the mount,
And in the deepest dark that midnights bring
Pierced through the heart of rocks, a sudden fount,
And leaped and tided as a crimson spring.

— *Der Teppich des Lebens*

VI.

Your eyes were dim with distant dreams, you tended
No more with care the holy fief, and knew
In every void the breath of living ended,
Now lift your head, for joy has come to you.

The cold and dragging year that was your share
A vernal tide of dawning wonders bore,
With bloomy hand, with shimmer in his hair,
A god appeared and stepped within your door.

Unite in gladness, now no longer darkened
With yearning for a bright and vanished bliss,
The calling of a god you too have hearkened,
The mouth of God has yielded you its kiss.

You also were elect, no longer mourn
The drift of days in unfulfillment sheathed,
Praised be your city where a god was born,
Praised be your age in which a god has breathed.

— *Der Siebente Ring*

VII.

We grieve when to the others favored more
You turn from us accorded lesser grace,
When our spirit yearning to adore,
At evening only your reflections face.

We should be fools if hate within us grew,
Because your burning often threatens blight,
We should be children if we reached for you
Who radiant are for every one: Sweet Light!

— *Das Neue Reich*

VIII.

The witless village lad three ditties knows
That when he comes incessantly are cried,
The one as from the graves of sires blows
Who yielded them to God before they died.

The other one is pure and blest, as though
By sisters chanted as they span; a strain
Of serving lasses who in endless row
Of years have wandered down the evening lane.

The third is menacing: in azure sheath
The ancient dagger — vengefulness and sin —
With sorrow bred at birth in kith and kin
And evil stars on many a roof beneath.

— *Das Jahr der Seele*

IX.

How much was lacking still to round the year
Since our feast, when frost already spun.
From yellow cloud in pointed grains! — Do none
Of our seeds then bud without a tear?

For all of tender feud and ardor bold,
And all the joy that upward with us swept,
For all the plaints and sorrows we have wept,
A single circuit of the sun was doled.

The clustered grapes that yesterday had bent
The vines with luminous and swelling wreath,
Now to the brews that long in dark ferment
Are trodden down, and to the vapid sheath.

Must this delight the paling harvests follow,
With blade and bush bereft of grace for grace,
And leave irrevocably with the swallow
In haze of summer lost without a trace?

X.

The hall of yellow radiance and of sun,
On level dome among the stars she reigns,
And from the well of fire in flashes run
Topazes interfused with amber grains.

On every side as mirrors ranged in files
—Entire towns' and kingdoms' plundered store—
The flat and unembellished golden tiles,
And lion skins are broad upon the floor.

To blind the piercing gaze of only One
The dazzling crown of worlds does not suffice,
And thrice a thousand heavy urns o'errun
With breath of citron, ambergris and spice.

ODELETTE

By Henri de Regnier

Un petit roseau m'a suffi
Poure faire frémir l'herbe haute
Et tout le pré
Et les doux saules
Et le ruisseau qui chante aussi;
Un petit roseau m'a suffi
A faire chanter la forêt.

Ceux qui passent l'ont entendu
Au fond du soir, en leurs pensées
Dans le silence et dans le vent,
Clair ou perdu
Proche ou lointain . . .
Ceux qui passent en leurs pensées
En écoutant, au fond d'eux-mêmes
L'entendront encore et l'entendent
Toujours qui chante.

Il m'a suffi
De ce petit roseau cueilli,
A la fontaine où vint l'Amour
Mirer, un jour,
Sa face grave
Et qui pleurait,
Pour faire pleurer ceux qui passent
Et trembler l'herbe et frémir l'eau;
Et j'ai, du souffle d'un roseau,
Fait chanter toute la forêt.

(*Les Jeux rustiques et divins*).

ODE IN MINIATURE

By Henri de Regnier
Translated from the French by William D. Hull, II.

Only a reed I needed
To set the high grass a - quiver
And all the meadow
And the fragile willows
And the brook which sings its song;
Only a reed I needed
To set the forest in song.

Those who pass have heard it
In the depth of evening, in secret thought
In the silence and in the wind,
Clear or muted,
Close or distant . . .
Those who pass in secret thought
And listen long, from deep within
Will hear the song again and always
Hear it singing.

I only needed
This small reed I gathered
At the fountain where Love came,
One day, to scan
His grave face
And wept,
To set those who pass to weeping,
The grass to trembling, the brook to murmuring;
And with the notes of a reed
I set all the forest in song.

MOTHER OF CONFUCIUS

By Lucy Salamanca

Yen Chentsai prayed upon the ancient hill
Of Nich'iu, in the twenty - second year
Of Hsiang the Duke of Lu. Patient and still
Warm with the fated conquest, bridal - dear
Of Shuliang Ho, whose seed within her womb
Stirred faintly as the wind in temple bells,
She knelt, beseeching sturdy timely bloom,
With offering of reed and asphodels.

Yen Chentsai's mother hardened with abuse
When first her daughter rounded with the child;
Her honored father named her light and loose
And cursed her partner in the union wild.
Then came a man - child, beautiful and wise,
To Chentsai, safe in her new paradise.

PLANET HOME

(*Letters to Lucy*: X)

By Gustav Davidson

The stars that pulse through time and space
Of courses mortals may not know
Return, in time, to blaze a place
In cosmic fields we scan below.

So, though my heart should wander far
And in an alien heaven roam,
The solar orbit of its star
Is fixed in you, its planet home!

ON THE WAY

By Ernst Viktor Knape

Translated from the Swedish by Miriam Heideman Krabup

Panting, hurrying, hurrying, panting,
the train rushes past me in the night,
the lamps from the lighted carriage windows
gleam on the drifts in a pattern of gold.
Now from afar stares a blood-red eye,
the rushing and noise dies away in the dark.
Alone I stand in the night and the cold.
There goes the road to the world!

I cross the tracks and go to the town,
I wander with memories hand in hand
and see the peonies gently waving
in the soft winds in the land of the sun;
the Mediterranean darkens swiftly
and the shadows thicken upon the shore,
and over the gleam of the water is gliding
the light of a steamer going to sea.

PUERTO RICAN PEASANT SONG

By Charles Edward Eaton

The flamboyant blooms red along
The road into the green mountains.
Out of the low hills comes a song;
In May grow fountains upon fountains
Of fire in our land. The warm blood
Of earth is shot against the sky,
And the soil is drenched with the flood
Of spring. So we shall loose the goat
To graze and eat the meadows bare.
Teresa, take your yellow coat,
We shall go to the market-square.
Look, how the flame lights the green hill;
The blossoms fall down on our head.
The fountains of fire still bloom
Along the way. Spring is not dead.

A CHILD CRIED AT NIGHT

By Ernst Wiechert

Translated from the German by Herman Salinger

Half through the night at a deep clock-stroke
on a sudden I woke,
banished out of my dreams' dark wood,
barefoot I stood in the hush alone
when from great clock-hands silence is thrown.
I sit and listen: did something tick
in the wall, deep under plaster and brick?
Did something brush my heart — or the beams?
Did something wander into my dreams?
Or did something . . . something cried in the night
that woke me and filled me so with fright.
Over the garden the wind blows mild.

The trees are awake in that blue world.
Star after star is downward hurled.
And the house is awake and the four walls quiver
and the long stairs drizzle and drip and shiver.
And now I know: it was a child.
A child cried out, half through the night,
and I awoke then, bathed in fright.
And I hear it whine in strangers' homes,
and where a light pushes the dark aside;
there it cried.
Aimlessly it wanders and roams.
Now it stands by my pillow's edge.
Now it weeps and gropes at the window ledge.
Now it stops by the woods in the moon to moan,
and always, always it's alone.
I lift my hands: "You child — O you child!"
But again the wind in the garden blows warm and mild.
Then I know, with pain and horror petrified:
It's *in my heart* the child has cried.

Down at the roots that once were I,
where my blood with longing runs bitter and dry,
there cowers the child and shields a dying ember
and whispers in sorrow to me: "Don't you remember?"

SONATINA

By Ruben Dario

Translated from the Spanish

By G. W. Umphrey and Laura Forsberg

The princess is sad. What brings tears to her eyes?
From her strawberry mouth escape tremulous sighs,
And the smile that once played on her lips is now gone.
The princess is pale in her chair of bright gold;
The keys of her clavier are now mute and cold;
In their vases, forgotten, the flowers have grown wan.

The garden is filled with the peacock's glory;
The duenna continues her tiresome story;
To the pranks of the clown all oblivious she seems,
For the eyes of the princess, in the far eastern sky,
Are following the flight of a vague dragon-fly
That bears her away to the land of her dreams.

Of the princes of Asia perhaps she is dreaming;
Or of him who has paused, in silvery coach gleaming,
To enjoy for a moment the light of her eyes.
Perhaps she is thinking of the king of the Isles
Who with roses and diamonds would win her bright smiles;
Or perhaps for the lord of rich pearls she now sighs.

"Would I were," cries the princess with lips rosy and
sweet,
"A butterfly gay or a swallow fleet!
Had I only their wings, o'er the clouds I'd take flight;
I would greet the fair lilies with verses of May;
On sea-sweeping breezes I'd sail far away;
Or I'd climb to the sun on a ray of clear light."

Of her distaff she's weary, she's tired of the tower;
Tired, too, of her jester, of falcon and bower;
Of the white, placid swans that swim on the lake.
The jasmins of the east, the dahlias of the west,
The lilies of the north, they are sad and depressed;
For the flower of the court, they are sad, for her sake.

The poor little princess with eyes of sky - blue,
In her gems she's a captive, in her gowns of bright hue;
A prison for her is the palace renowned,
A magnificent palace, well guarded by slaves,
A hundred black slaves with a hundred sharp glaives,
A colossal dragoon and a vigilant hound.

"Oh would I were winged like the butterfly glad!
(The princess is languid; the princess is sad)
Oh vision of roses, of ivory and gold!
To the land of a prince would I then wing my flight,
(The princess is sad; the princess is white)
Who is fairer than dawn, with a beauty untold."

Says the fairy godmother: "Hush, hush, dear, your
crying;
On a Pegasus fleet there comes to you flying,
From a faraway land, the victor of death;
With a hawk on his wrist, at his girdle a sword,
One who loves you unseen, your cavalier lord,
To kindle your lips with the warmth of his breath."

TWO POEMS

By Ralph Friedrich

LEDA AND THE SWAN

(*Michael Angelo*)

She lies enraptured, taking in a dream
The seed of godhood, feeling on her breast
The velvet throat, the head against her pressed,
The wings above her: folded in the gleam
Of shining feathers. How shall she esteem
The love of men hereafter, who caressed
The shape of deity? What mortal guest
Could teach her joy whose joy has been supreme?

And the exultant swan: how shall he lust
For goddesses again? What bright surmise
Already glitters in his splendid eyes?
What other wonders fashioned of the dust
Will know him yet, whose fierce desire has thrust
Divinity away for sweeter guise?

TO A CAT

You would have held my pity for a flaw,
A baleful imperfection. But you lie
Unmindful now, the unimploring paw
Against your bloody mouth, the slitted eye
Death-sealed and cold, the prideful threat of claw
Forever sheathed, the midnight passion-cry
Forever stilled. Now, red along the jaw,
The blood is frozen. Night has seen you die.

Engaged with death in the conspiracy,
The night that was your province and your shield
Denied you wooded lot or weedy field
Wherein to foil this last indignity:
Here, publicly, upon a bank of mud
Your debt to earth is nullified in blood.

TWO POEMS

By John Marcellus Steadman, III

NOCTURNE

No motion is tonight, but only peace,
And silence nestling downwards from the stars —
A frozen melody of hushèd bars
That night clasps to her heart without release.
The trees sleep still, untouched by any breeze,
And quietly these waters seek calm rest.
And even pain has ceased to dull the breast,
And dreams have filtered downward through the trees
Even with moonlight. Finely chiseled lie
The marble-fretted needles of the pines
Beneath the sculptor moon, and dreamily
The mist-bathed lake has mirrored her confines.
There is such beauty etched in still repose
As if she paused a moment here — and froze.

SONNET

They tell me, love, that after death your dust
Destroying winds shall scatter over ground.
The bleak finality of bones shall round
A thousand years' eternity of rust;
The grave will take all thoughts, all dreams in trust.
All silver-wingèd fancies of the night,
All fairy-woven, lucid skeins of light
The earth will snatch, out of unsated lust.
And yet, dear heart, I think in all the world
No single spark of beauty ever dies.
After your breath is hushed, the winds will blow
More softly. In the fields the flowers will grow
More richly for your dust; and from your pearled
And marbled bones a Venus some day rise.